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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF
BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

THE STOLEN BONDS;
OR, HOW WALL STREET WILL MAKE HIS MARK.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.



The boys sprang forward and gripped the man by the arm. "Pull!" cried Will to his companion. "Let go, will you!" cried the fellow, struggling to free himself. "Not much," replied the boys, in a breath, pulling all the harder.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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THE STOLEN BONDS

OR,

How Wall Street Will Made His Mark

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.

THE MISSING BONDS AND CLERK.

"If anybody had told me that Bob Burton, our junior clerk, was dishonest, I'd have felt like punching him in the jaw and calling him a liar," said Dick Rogers, a Wall Street messenger; "but—"

"Now you have your doubts, eh?" replied Will Withers, known among his brother messengers as Wall Street Will.

Both boys worked for Broker John Burkett, whose office was in the Eclipse Building, No. — Wall Street.

"How can I help it when the evidence points to the fact that he has skipped with that package of D. & G. bonds?" replied Dick.

"I don't believe he's skipped with the bonds," said Will, doggedly. "Nothing would make me believe it. Bob Burton is the squarest chap who steps in shoe leather to-day."

"I don't blame you standing up for him, Will. You and he are next door to chums, and you're sweet on his sister Nellie. It is right and proper you should defend him, but—"

"Everybody in the office, excepting me, seems to have decided that he's guilty. Perhaps it's natural they should when the boss sides against him. You think like the others. I know you do, though you don't like to come out flat-footed before me. Well, you and the rest of the bunch, the boss included, are all wrong."

"I wish I could think so, for I always liked Bob, but—"

"That 'but' sticks in your craw, doesn't it?" said Will, half resentfully.

"I can't help it if it does. Mr. Burkett handed him the package of bonds to deliver to William Hodge, at a house on Long Island. That was two days ago, and he immediately left the office on his errand. He didn't deliver the bonds to Mr. Hodge, but a person answering his description was seen boarding the West Shore Chicago express an hour after he left the office, and—"

"Well, go on."

"That's all; but it's enough to throw the strongest kind of suspicion on Bob."

"It doesn't seem to have occurred to you that something may have happened to him—something serious."

"What could have happened to him in broad daylight that would not be known by this time? If he met with an accident—knocked down by an auto, or something of that kind—the fact would have been reported in the papers, and the boss would have found him in the hospital or the morgue."

"I'm sure something did happen to him."

"What do you think happened to him?"

"I don't know."

"There you are. You're just sticking up for him because you don't want to admit that he's really a thief."

"He isn't a thief, and I don't want you to apply that word to him in my presence. If everybody in Wall Street was as honest as he there wouldn't be so many lambs on the road to the poorhouse."

"All right; don't get mad. We'll let it go at that," said Dick.

This conversation happened in a quick-lunch house after business hours.

The subject of it, Bob Burton, the youngest of Broker Burkett's clerks, had disappeared in a most mysterious manner two days before, and with him vanished fifty \$1,000 D. & G. Railroad first mortgage five per cent. bonds, that sold in the market at a premium, which the broker had intrusted to him to deliver to a customer of the house at his home in Redwood, Long Island.

Bob had, prior to his promotion to the counting-room, been one of the messengers of the office, and his reputation was good.

During a four years' connection with the office he had often carried thousands' of dollars worth of securities, as well as cash, around the district for his employer, and nothing had ever happened.

Now it was believed that the young fellow had yielded to a sudden temptation to make a considerable sum of money at the cost of his reputation, and the risk of capture and punishment for the bonds were coupon ones, and readily negotiable.

Why were his associates, as well as the broker, every one, in fact, except Will, who remained loyal to him, so ready to accept his disappearance as evidence of guilt, when persons often vanish in a great city owing to circumstances over which they have no control?"

Because Sam Burkett, the cashier, who was the broker's nephew, had reported in the counting-room that the detective, hired by his uncle to look Bob up, had found positive evidence that a person, who looked exactly like Burton, had purchased a through ticket for Chicago, and left Weehawken on the noon express for the West soon after the young clerk left the office with the packet of bonds.

Also, because Sam Burkett said that Bob had been seen by two or three people who knew him, walking rapidly toward Broadway, above Nassau street, when he ought to have turned up the latter street, which was the more expeditious route for him to have taken to reach the Brooklyn Bridge entrance, where he could catch a trolley car that would have taken him direct to the Long Island depot.

Also, because Sam Burkett said that Bob had lately remarked to him that if he had a few thousand dollars at that particular time he knew how he could make his fortune.

Those were the three counts against the missing clerk.

When brought forward by the cashier, who hinted that there was other evidence against Bob which he was not permitted to disclose, all hands, with the exception of Will, were satisfied that matters looked very black against Burton.

In defending his friend, Will disposed of the first count as not conclusive.

In his opinion it was a case of mistaken identity.

The second count he dismissed as amounting to nothing, for it was probable that Bob preferred to ride up Broadway to City Hall Park, and then cross over to the Brooklyn Bridge, instead of walking up Nassau street to Park Row.

"The latter route is more direct, I admit, but I doubt if you can make the Bridge quicker that way than by taking a Broadway car," he said. "In any case it's easier to go by

a car than to walk the distance, and if there is any difference in time it isn't worth considering."

As for the third count, he didn't consider it cut any ice at all.

In the first place they only had the cashier's word for it that Bob had made such a remark.

In the second place, any one who kept in touch with Wall Street affairs might make such a remark a dozen times a year.

He had done it himself more than once.

Will, however, was only a messenger, and his argument didn't go as far as the word of the cashier, especially as that individual was the boss' nephew.

The result was the missing Bob remained under the cloud of suspicion, which nothing but his reappearance with the bonds and a satisfactory explanation would dissipate.

Of course, Will was much concerned over the disappearance of his friend Bob, and wondered what was the cause of it.

Bob lived with his sister Nellie in a four-room flat on the upper East Side.

Nellie was cashier in a big butcher shop, where she put in the day between eight and six.

They were orphans and devoted to each other.

Will, who lived with his married aunt six or eight blocks from the Burton flat, called on them on the average of twice a week.

Though Bob was his particular friend, Nellie was really the attraction that drew him there.

She was a pretty girl, and a good one, and the young messenger was much interested in her.

On the evening of the day that Bob left the office with the package of bonds to take to Mr. Hodge, and failed to return in due time with the receipt for the same, Will went over to his flat, thinking his friend might have been taken ill and gone home.

Nellie was home waiting for her brother, and wondering what kept him away.

She was greatly alarmed when Will told her that Bob had not returned from his mission, and she became more worried as time passed and he did not come home.

On the afternoon of the following day the cashier circulated his suspicions.

That evening Will called at the Burton flat again and found Nellie nearly wild with anxiety.

She was sure that something dreadful had happened to her brother, and Will did his best to comfort and reassure her.

Of course, he did not hint about what was said at the office.

He told her that the hospitals of Brooklyn and Manhattan had been communicated with, and her brother was not in any of them.

He said that Mr. Burkett had employed two detectives to look for him, thinking he had gone astray somehow—that's the way he put it.

He assured her that Bob would turn up all right, and begged her to be as patient as she could, telling her that worrying wouldn't bring him back any sooner.

After his unsatisfactory talk with Dick Rogers, his fel-

low messenger, he went home, and after supper started over to see Nellie Burton again.

He felt decidedly uncomfortable, for he could not disguise the fact that his friend was more than suspected of having stolen the bonds and skipped, and he was afraid that one of the detectives would call on Nellie and tell her in what light her brother was regarded at the office.

He knew that would almost break her heart.

He reached the flat house and climbed the stairs to the Burton apartment.

He knocked on the door, but Nellie did not come to let him in as usual.

He looked through the keyhole after trying the knob, and all was dark inside.

"She isn't home," he thought. "I wonder where she went?"

He walked downstairs, waited around the entrance for nearly an hour, and then took a stroll down Third avenue.

He returned in an hour, but the Burton flat was still locked up.

Will was surprised at Nellie's absence, and could not imagine where she could have gone.

He waited for perhaps twenty minutes, and as it was then going on eleven, he gave it up and went home.

CHAPTER II.

WILL MAKES A DEAL IN THE MARKET.

Will Withers was something of a small speculator on the quiet.

After accumulating fifty dollars, he had risked it as a marginal deposit on a certain railroad stock.

His first deal was successful and he doubled his money.

A month later he put up the \$100 on ten shares of another stock, and collared a profit of \$60.

After that he speculated whenever he thought he saw a good chance to win.

His luck varied, but now, at the end of a year, he was worth \$600.

He had lately been watching L. & M. with a sharp eye. It had been going up, a little at a time.

After leaving Dick the previous afternoon he went around to a little banking and brokerage office on Nassau street, where he had been trading, and left an order for fifty shares of the stock at the market price of 82.

This was the biggest deal he had essayed yet, for it took \$500 of his little capital to swing it.

It was quite a risk for him to take, for he had no tip to encourage him, but depended wholly upon his private judgment.

Everything pointed to a general rise in the market, and naturally he expected L. & M. would participate in that rise to an extent that would give him a good profit on his investment.

The first thing he did when he reached the office next morning was to pick up a Wall Street daily and look over it for the latest financial news.

Dick came in soon after and wished him good-morning. "Seems to me you're reading Wall Street intelligence,

Will," he said, as he opened up his morning paper. "What do you find so interesting in it?"

"I like to keep in touch with affairs in the Street," replied Will.

"What do you care about what's going on in the Street?"

"If I didn't care I wouldn't bother looking things up."

"Studying to be a broker?" grinned Dick.

"I might do worse."

"You've got lots of time to think of that later on."

"Read your paper and don't bother me."

"All right," replied Dick, and there was silence for a minute or two. "Oh, I say, listen to this," said Dick, presently. "Stolen Bonds. A Trusted Clerk Disappears with \$50,000 Worth of Securities. John Burkett, Broker, of No. — Wall Street the Victim. On Monday morning, Robert Burton, a junior clerk in the employ of John Burkett, a stockholder, was intrusted with —"

"That will do. I don't want to hear about it," interrupted Will shortly. "I think it's a blamed shame to publish the story when it hasn't been proved that Bob stole those bonds."

"Oh, if you don't want to hear about it I won't read it; but I thought you'd like to learn about further developments in the case."

"What further developments are there?" asked Will with some interest.

"The Cleveland police, acting on instructions from Headquarters, in this city, boarded a Lake Shore train and arrested a young man answering to the description of Bob. He proved that he wasn't Burton at all, but Frank Deering, traveling for a Fulton street paint company. He was allowed to proceed on his way."

"What did I tell you?" exclaimed Will, triumphantly. "I said it was a case of mistaken identity."

"You were right there, but that doesn't prove that Bob didn't take the bonds."

"He ought to be considered innocent till he's proved guilty."

"If he was innocent he'd have turned up before this."

"You may take my word for it that he would have turned up if he could."

"Which means that you still think something happened to him on his way to Hodge's?"

"I do."

"I don't see what could have happened to him that the newspapers and detectives have failed so far to bring to light."

"Some crook might have learned that he was carrying a package of bonds, waylaid him on his way between the station and Mr. Hodge's house, done him up and hid his body," said Will.

"What, in open daylight! I don't believe it could have been done without attracting attention."

"Maybe not in this city or in Brooklyn, but out in the country it's different."

"Hodge lives in the village of Redwood. If Bob was attacked on his way from the station somebody would have seen —"

"They might and they might not. Village houses are not built close together like city ones, and the streets are generally shaded by trees."

"Well, if he was struck down and robbed, his body would have been found. You can't tell me that his assailant would take the risk of dragging him off somewhere when all he had to do was to skip out with the bonds. The discovery of Bob's dead or unconscious body would have taken the mystery out of this case."

"The fact that no trace has been found of Bob is enough to convince me that his body was put out of the way."

Dick was skeptical about Bob having been attacked at all, and as the clerks and Sam Burkett, the cashier, had arrived by this time, the argument between the two boys came to an end.

Will was called up by the cashier, who handed him several certificates of Reading stock and told him to take them across the street to Morgan & Co.'s and have them transferred.

Will hurried off with the certificates, two of which called for 100 shares each, while the others were for lesser amounts of the stock.

He went to the transfer clerk's window and handed the certificates to that individual.

The clerk looked them over and handed them back to him.

Will then wrote on the proper line the name of the man who had bought the shares through Mr. Burkett.

In this case he wrote the names of three different persons, as the stock had not all been ordered by the same man.

As soon as he handed the certificates back to the clerk he received receipts for them, and these he carried back to the office.

Next day, after half-past one, either he or Dick would return with the receipts properly filled in, and then new certificates, properly filled in and signed, would be handed back.

While Will was attending to this matter, Dick had been despatched to a broker with stock that had been sold by Mr. Burkett at the Exchange the afternoon previous.

When Dick reached the broker's office he presented the certificates and received a check in payment for them.

Before he returned he took the check to the bank on which it was drawn and had it certified.

Will got back to the office first, but was sent out again almost immediately.

This time he carried a note to the office of a trader in the Mills Building.

The broker was engaged with an important visitor, and the young messenger had to wait.

There were two brokers in the room waiting to see the trader also.

They were talking together, and the subject of their conversation was the stolen bonds as printed in that morning's paper.

In their opinion another trusted employee had gone astray.

From that subject they branched off on the market.

Both agreed that a sharp rise was in sight, and they seemed particularly interested in L. & M.

One said that he had received a tip to get in on that stock, and he had done so to the extent of his available funds.

"I bought 1,000 shares myself yesterday," said the other. "It looked pretty good to me."

"You hold on to them and you'll make a good thing," replied his companion. "I look for a ten or fifteen point rise inside of a week."

"On the strength of your tip, eh?"

"Yes."

At that moment the chance was offered for Will to deliver his note, and he took advantage of it.

He received a reply to take back, and hurried away.

"I guess I made no mistake in risking my money on L. & M.," he thought. "A ten-point rise will double my money, and if it goes higher my deal will pan out still better, if nothing happens to dump me."

Mr. Burkett was down when Will got back, and the broker sent him with a note to a commission merchant on Barclay street.

"Tell Mr. Burkett all right," said the merchant after reading the note. "By the way, I saw by the paper this morning that one of the clerks of your office has skipped out with a lot of bonds."

"It hasn't been proved that he skipped out with the package of bonds. It is true that Bob Burton has disappeared with the bonds in his possession, but he hasn't stolen the securities just the same, for he's as honest as the day is long. It is my opinion he was waylaid and done up," replied Will.

"If his reputation for honesty is so high, why is he credited with the theft?"

"I can't tell you, sir. Seems to me judgment has been passed too hastily upon him. At any rate, one of the points against him has fallen through."

"What was that?"

"That he was seen boarding a West Shore Chicago express an hour after he left the office. The person who was believed to be him was arrested when the train reached Cleveland, but proved to be a traveling salesman."

"Yes, I saw that fact mentioned in the paper. So you think the missing clerk is the victim of foul play?"

"I am certain of it."

"What makes you feel so sure?"

"Merely my conviction of his honesty."

"Hum! If the bonds are sold, can they be traced?"

"I believe their numbers and description have been sent to every Exchange in the country. The paper will be posted so that all the brokers can make a note of missing securities for their guidance."

In that case the thief is not likely to realize on his stealings."

"Bob Burton knows that as well as anybody in Wall Street. That's another reason why he wouldn't steal the bonds."

"It would seem hardly worth his while unless he knew where he could dispose of them without risk at the start."

"That could have been done, of course, but the fact would probably have come to light by this time. So far as I know no trace of the bonds has been found."

"You mean they have not been offered for sale, I suppose?"

"Apparently they have not."

The merchant had nothing more to say on the subject, and so Will took his leave.

That afternoon an advertisement was printed in one of the papers which stated that Broker Burkett would pay \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest of Bob Burton and the recovery of the bonds, the description of which followed.

CHAPTER III.

WILL INVESTIGATES.

Sometimes Will took the day's deposits to the bank and sometimes Dick performed the errand.

On this particular day Will was given the job by the cashier.

He returned a few minutes after three and turned in the book.

He thought that Sam Burkett favored him with a somewhat malicious smile.

"Say, Will," said Dick, who was doing nothing in particular. "There's another development in the bond robbery."

"What is it?" asked Will, curiously.

"The cashier thinks that it clinches the guilt of Bob."

"He does, eh? Seems to me he's doing all he can to make out that Bob is a thief."

"A detective was in here while you were out, and brought some information to the boss. The old man called his nephew inside. The sleuth didn't stay long, and he and the cashier came out together. After the officer went away, Sam Burkett told Jones, the second book-keeper, that Bob's sister had disappeared, bag and baggage, from their flat. She put her goods in storage and took a train for the West."

Will gasped at this piece of intelligence.

He didn't know what to make out of it.

"The cashier says it's clear she's gone to join her brother."

Will had nothing to say.

Knowing how devoted brother and sister were to each other, he was sure Nellie wouldn't leave New York, with her brother's fate in the balance.

If she had really done as reported, she must have acted on a commission from her brother.

If she had received news from her brother, why had she not notified the office of the fact?

"What do you think about it?" asked Dick, looking hard at Will.

"I've got no opinion to express on the subject except that it doesn't strike me as natural," said Will, slowly.

"Don't you believe it?"

"I'll have to think it over."

"It must be true, for the news was evidently brought by the detective."

"Maybe it is."

"Hits you rather hard, doesn't it?"

"How?"

"Looks as if she's gone to join her brother. If he's out West there can't be much doubt about his having skipped with the bonds."

Will made no reply.

His confidence in Bob had got a rude jolt, but for all that he was just as ready to defend him as ever.

Sam Burkett knew that Will was Bob's only real supporter in the office, and probably that was the reason he had given the boy that peculiar smile.

Dick was called up by the cashier and sent out.

Will sat down to think.

His thoughts were far from pleasant.

"There must be some mistake," he figured. "Nellie has never gone out West. Bob isn't out there. I'll stop in at their flat on my way home and see—"

"Withers!"

It was the cashier's voice.

"Yes, sir," replied Will, starting to see what he wanted.

"Take this note to the address on Cortlandt street and bring me what you'll get there," said Sam Burkett.

Will hurried away, for it was close on to his quitting time.

The address on Cortlandt street proved to be a trunk store.

The young messenger presented the note and received a handsome suit-case, lettered "S. B."

He carried it back to the office.

Dick had left for the day, and had either gone home or to a lunch-house.

"Anything more, Mr. Burkett?" asked Will.

"Yes. Sit down."

Will looked at the clock.

The time was a quarter to four.

He picked up the market report, which had been left a few minutes before.

Singling out L. & M., he saw that 118,650 shares had changed hands that day.

That was quite a bunch of stock for one day's operations. The price had gone up a point since morning.

He had made \$50 that day, on paper.

Fifteen minutes passed away and then the cashier called on Will again.

"Know where I live?" he asked the boy.

"No, sir."

"Well, there's my address on that slip of paper. Take that suit-case up there and leave it with the porter. Here's half a dollar. Pay your carfare out of it and keep the change."

Will took the suit-case and left.

Twenty minutes of five he ascended a short flight of marble steps to the iron-latticed gate in front of the door of a swell bachelor apartment house on Park avenue.

He rang the bell, and after an interval a man, in a subdued kind of uniform, appeared.

"Does Mr. Samuel Burkett live here?" asked Will.

"Yes."

"He told me to leave this suit-case with the porter."

"I'm the porter. Hand it over."

As the word "Porter" was traced in a kind of golden script on both corners of the man's collar, Will had no doubt of his identity, and delivered the suit-case to him.

Will then walked back to Third avenue and boarded an elevated train for One Hundred and Twenty-fifth street.

Alighting at that station, he went directly to the Burton flat.

A glance at the letter-box showed him that Bob's name was missing.

The detective's report seemed to be true after all.

Will went down in the basement to receive the janitor's confirmation, and any particulars about the sudden move of the Burtons.

The janitress came to the door of her rooms.

"Have the Burtons moved?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Where to?"

"Their furniture was taken to a storage house."

"Did the young lady give up the key herself?"

"No. She sent the key by the storage-house man."

"Then you didn't see her before she left?"

"No. I saw her leave the house last evening about seven o'clock in an automobile."

"In an automobile?"

"Yes."

"Did you speak to her then?"

"No. She seemed to be in a hurry. Her brother is in trouble, isn't he?"

"What makes you think he is?"

"There was a story in the paper this morning about—"

"Yes, I know. I work in the same office on Wall Street. It hasn't been proved that he stole the bonds intrusted to him for delivery. He is merely suspected because he has failed to turn up, and the bonds were not delivered."

"The paper says he's charged with stealing them."

"You mustn't believe all you see in the papers. When was the furniture removed?"

"About noon to-day."

"Did the mover present an order signed by Miss Burton?"

"He did."

"Are you sure it was her signature?"

"I suppose it was when she sent it."

"Have you got the order?"

"Yes. I always save such things."

"That's right, because if the order happened to be a forgery there would be trouble."

"I wouldn't have let the things go without the key was presented, too."

"Did you take notice of the name of the storage company?"

"Yes, it was the Eagle."

Will knew that the Eagle Company was a lower west side concern.

As there were a score of storage-houses nearer than that one, Will wondered why that had been chosen.

"Well, you hang on to that order, madam. It is possible you may have to produce it. By the way, was there a detective here investigating?"

"There was a man here yesterday who said he was a detective. He was here again to-day after the things were moved. He asked me some questions."

"About Bob Burton?"

"Yes, and about Miss Burton, too."

"What did he want to know about her?"

"He wanted to know if she had received a letter in the last day or two. I couldn't tell him. He wanted to know something about her movements, and I told him where she worked. I also told him what I told you about her going

off in a cab last evening, and about the furniture having been moved to the Eagle Storage-house. Then he went away."

Will guessed the man was the detective who had called at the office that afternoon and reported the later facts.

He bade the woman good-afternoon and went home.

Next morning Will started downtown uncommonly early. His purpose was to visit the Eagle Storage-house.

He reached the place at a quarter past eight.

He found some difficulty in connection with the information he was after, but he finally learned that the order to move the Burton's furniture came from Bob himself, not in person, but by letter, enclosing the key of the flat and a \$10 bill.

He was familiar with Bob's handwriting and asked to see the letter.

His request was refused.

Then he asked to be permitted to look at the signature on the letter.

"Why do you want to see it?"

"I would like to see if it's genuine."

"What business is that of yours?"

"I want to know if he really sent you that order."

"I can't oblige you, as our customer's business is confidential."

"Was there a detective looking into the matter yesterday afternoon?"

"What right or authority have you for making these inquiries?"

"I have no authority. I am acting solely in Bob Burton's interest."

"Well, we have his furniture on storage here. That's all I can tell you."

The clerk turned away, and Will, finding that he could learn nothing more, left.

CHAPTER IV.

WILL VISITS REDWOOD.

Next morning Will noticed that when Jones, the second book-keeper, came in that he opened the office safe, passed out the books and papers, and then took possession of the cashier's desk.

He called Dick's attention to the fact.

"I guess Sam Burkett must have gone West to follow up Bob," said that lad. "Probably a detective went with him. It's likely they have a line on Bob's route and will bring him back with them. He was a fool to send for his sister."

Will picked up a Wall Street paper and began to read.

He noticed a paragraph about L. & M., and found that it predicted a substantial rise in the price of that stock.

By the time he had finished it he was called on to go out.

Nothing of importance to Will happened that day except the rise of another point in L. & M., which put him \$100 ahead on his deal so far.

He took a Madison Avenue car uptown that afternoon, got off at a certain street, walked over to Park avenue, and

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rang the bell at the apartment house where Sam Burkett lived.

"Has Mr. Burkett gone out West?" he asked the porter.

"He has left the city to be gone several days," was the reply.

"All right," replied Will, who then walked off, pretty well satisfied that the cashier had started on the presumed trail of Bob Burton.

Nevertheless Will didn't believe that his friend Bob was out West at all.

To believe that was equivalent to admitting that Bob had fled with the bonds.

Still he couldn't help feeling puzzled over the disappearance of Nellie.

If she had really gone to join her brother, why had the furniture been stored in place of being sold?

It looked queer to Will.

Next day was Saturday, and the office closed up at one.

The young messenger shoved his pay envelope in his pocket, went to a restaurant, and had a good lunch.

Then he walked up to the Brooklyn Bridge, jumped on a car and rode to the Long Island Railroad depot, where he bought a ticket to Redwood.

An hour later he got out at the village station.

He found the agent and asked him if many passengers came there from New York on week days.

"Not over half a dozen commuters at this season," replied the agent. "They go to the city in the morning and return late in the afternoon, except on Saturday, when most of them come on the train that brought you. That train only runs on Saturday. The regular mid-day train leaves Brooklyn at 11.45, and reaches here at 12.45. It doesn't stop if there are no passengers for this place."

"Do you recollect if it stopped last Monday?"

"Last Monday? Yes, I remember it stopped to set down a smooth-faced young man of about twenty-one or two."

Will's heart gave a jump.

"He wore a check suit, didn't he, with a derby hat, and a red-and-black necktie?"

"I guess he did. At any rate, I remember he wore a derby, and had a reddish tie," replied the agent.

"That was Bob," breathed Will to himself. "Did you notice the direction he took when he left the station?" he said aloud.

"There was an automobile waiting for him."

"An automobile!" exclaimed Bob.

"Yes. The man who came here in it went up to him, and after a few words they got into it and went off."

"In what direction?"

"That road there, which leads right into the village."

"I suppose you know Mr. Hodge, who lives here?"

"Oh, yes. He lives on Lincoln avenue."

"In the village?"

"Yes."

"And that road is the one you take to reach his house from here?"

"Yes."

"What time does the first afternoon train for Brooklyn on week days pass here?"

"Two-ten. It doesn't stop unless I flag it."

"Did the young man we were speaking about come back and ask you to stop that train for him?"

"No."

"Did he take the next train?"

"Not to my knowledge. I haven't seen him since he left in the auto."

"Do you know if that was Mr. Hodge's auto that he got into?"

"Mr. Hodge doesn't own an auto, though he's rich; he's rich enough to own several if he wanted to."

"You don't know who the auto did belong to, I suppose?"

"Haven't the least idea. It was a red machine, and didn't look like any of those I've seen in this neighborhood."

"And the man who came in it was a stranger to you?"

"He was. I never saw him before."

Will paused and then asked the agent when the next train for Brooklyn stopped at the station.

"Four-forty. If you want to take that train, let me know when you get here, and I'll flag it for you," the man said.

"All right," replied Will. "The young man who got off the train on Monday is a friend of mine, and I'm looking for him. I'd give something to know where that auto took him. He came here to see Mr. Hodge, but Mr. Hodge sent word that he did not call at his house. The question is, where did he go?"

"It would be hard to say if you have no idea."

"Most all the people hereabouts have lived here some time, I suppose?"

"Yes. Along about next month we'll begin to have new faces—people who come here for the summer and stay till the first of October or so."

Judging that he had learned all that the agent could tell him about Bob, for he was satisfied that the young man was his friend, Will thanked him and walked off up the road toward the village.

"So, there was an automobile waiting for Bob when he got here," thought Will, as he walked along. "That shows he was expected. Now, nobody here but Mr. Hodge could have been looking for Bob, and as Mr. Hodge doesn't own an auto, and has declared that he didn't see him, why, of course, the party who took Bob from the station had no connection with him. Under these circumstances I must conclude that somebody, who found out that Bob was going to bring a package of bonds to Mr. Hodge on the 12.15 train, is at the bottom of this mysterious business. He must have come on from Brooklyn in the auto in time to meet the train. Then doubtless by representing that he was sent by Mr. Hodge to meet him, and bring him to his house, Bob was induced to get into the auto. The man then carried him to some lonesome spot or house in the neighborhood, did him up and robbed him of the bonds. That seems to be a reasonable deduction from the facts I have picked up from the agent. But the mystery is only partially explained. There are other points that I can't fit together. One is, if a job was put up on Bob to rob him of the bonds, how did the rascal learn in the first place that he was going to bring a package of bonds to Mr. Hodge? This information must have been known outside of our office some hours ahead in order to give the conspirator

time to lay his plans. Nobody outside of Mr. Burkett and his nephew should have known anything about the matter, and they would hardly advertise the fact. That's mystery number one. Mystery number two is the sudden departure from New York of Nellie. She must have received a note that she supposed came from her brother. Mystery number three is the giving up of their flat and storage of their furniture. If the rascal merely intended to get the bonds away from Bob, and succeeded in doing so, as his failure to reach Mr. Hodge's house would indicate, why should Nellie figure in the subsequent proceedings? If Bob was put out of business, robbed and left in some lonely part of the neighborhood, the fact would have come to light, I should think, and we would have heard of it at the office. Instead of that the detectives on the case have been accumulating evidence tending to show that he never came to Redwood at all, but deliberately fled with the bonds out West. Talk about puzzling mysteries, I think this one takes the cake."

Will was fully satisfied that the detectives were on the wrong scent.

The statement of the station agent seemed to prove that Bob had come to the village on the train he was expected to take, and that, so far as the agent knew, he had not left the place again by train.

Well, admitting the truth of that, where was he now, and was he alive or dead?

If alive, was Nellie with him?

Will walked about the village at random, unable to think of any way of getting a clue to the whereabouts of his friend.

He dropped into a number of business places and inquired if a red automobile had been noticed on the street shortly after noon on the preceding Monday.

None of the persons he asked had any recollection of such a machine.

Finally it drew near the time for the train to reach the station.

Will returned there, asked the agent to flag it for him, got aboard and returned to Brooklyn, whence he made his way home.

CHAPTER V.

THE MAN IN THE TRANSOM.

Will decided to tell no one at the office about what he had learned from the station agent at Redwood.

It was so indefinite, anyway, that probably no attention would be paid to it.

Mr. Burkett would likely declare it a case of mistaken identity, like that of the traveling salesman on the Lake Shore train who had been taken for Bob.

Will was not anxious to be twitted by his fellow clerks about the interest he was taking in the missing Bob, whose guilt seemed to be an established fact.

Dick would be sure to guy him not a little, and they might get into a scrap over the matter.

Broker Burkett had paid cash for the \$50,000 D. & G. bonds, worth in the market about \$61,500, and the with-

drawal of that amount of money from his bank account, which he expected to immediately replace with Mr. Hodge's check as soon as that gentleman received the securities, rather cramped the broker's working capital, for he had considerable money invested in a private deal that was hanging fire.

Under these circumstances he was decidedly anxious to have his guilty clerk captured and the bonds recovered.

Satisfied from the reports he had received that Bob Burton had gone West, he sent his nephew, Sam, and a detective to follow up the presumed trail of the young absconder.

During the week following Will's visit to Redwood no developments transpired in the case, at least no news came to the ears of the employees.

Everything they had heard before came to them through Sam Burkett, and all his statements were confirmed by the newspaper story published on the Wednesday morning following Bob's disappearance.

Now that Sam was away, the source of news had dried up.

Will had done a lot of thinking, and some planning, but no one knew that but himself.

The market had gradually stiffened, and L. & M. had advanced to 86 by Wednesday, which put the young messenger \$200 ahead of the game on paper.

On Thursday it took a sudden jump to 90, and became the leading feature on the floor of the board-room.

The general improvement in the market had brought a crowd of lambs to the Street and unloosened their purse strings, consequently business was looking up in the brokerage offices.

Mr. Burkett had his share of the rush, and Will and Dick were kept pretty busy, as were also the clerks.

Instead of getting off as usual at half-past three, Will was kept on till five, helping out in the counting-room.

Dick wasn't required to stay, and gave Will the laugh.

Will didn't mind that, for he was now in a position to learn a lot of new wrinkles about the business.

In fact, it wasn't at all certain but he would be promoted to Bob's desk, at increased wages, of course.

He wasn't sure but he was being tested to see if he could make good.

As summer was close at hand the change probably would not be made until early fall, since business was sure to slow down shortly.

L. & M. closed at 90 5-8 that day, and opened next morning, which was Friday, at 91.

When Will visited the Exchange at noon it was up to 95. Inside of another hour it had boomed to par.

Will now thought he ought to sell out, for he saw \$900 in sight.

He found no chance to reach the little bank, so busy was he kept on the move by his boss.

He went to the Exchange at two and saw that L. & M. was going at 103, with the floor in an uproar over it.

"My gracious!" he exclaimed. "If I only could sell now I'll clean up \$1,000 profit. I've simply got to sneak the time somehow to do it, for this boom is liable to burst at any moment. It would be a shame to lose so much money."

He was so excited over the prospect of making that

thousand that when he left the Exchange he venturned to run up to the little bank and lose the time necessary to close out his deal.

When he got back to the office nothing was said to him about being out too long, as Jones was too busy to take notice, and he was easy, anyway.

He found a chance to look at the office ticker, and noted the fact that his stock was then going at 104 and a fraction.

"If the bank sells it at the present price I'll make \$1,100 clear of all expenses," he told himself.

At any rate he counted on making over \$1,000, and he was as happy as a clam at high tide.

When he went to the bank with the day's deposits shortly before three, he took the opportunity to visit a lunch-house and get a sandwich, a piece of pie and a cup of coffee, for he was slated to remain till five, and perhaps later.

In fact, that evening the entire office force, Dick excepted, had to work till ten o'clock.

About ten o'clock next morning Will took a telegram in to his boss.

He waited till Mr. Burkett had read it, thinking there might be a reply.

There wasn't, so he returned and told the messenger he could go.

Will had an idea that telegram came from Sam Burkett, and he wished he knew what it said.

As he had seen the broker crumble it up in his hand and toss it into the waste basket, he determined to try and get it after Mr. Burkett left.

He did not have long to wait.

The broker called him in to assist him on with his coat, and then walked out of the room, leaving Will in possession.

The young messenger went to the wicker basket, rescued the crumpled telegram and put it in his pocket.

He returned outside in time to get his pay envelope, which was a signal to him to quit.

"Coming to lunch?" asked Dick.

"Yes, I'll eat with you if you're good," replied Will.

"Ain't I always good?" asked Dick with a grin.

They went to a lunch-house on Cedar street and lined up at the counter on tall stools.

"I haven't heard anything more about Bob," said Dick, after he had given his order.

"Neither have I," replied Will. "The Great Mogul who gave out the news is away."

"Meaning Sam Burkett."

"Of course. He was our source of intelligence."

"Naturally, for he stands next to the boss, and besides is that gentleman's nephew. One of these days he'll be junior partner, and eventually, probably, the whole shooting match. It's better to be born lucky than good looking."

"Yes, there was a scarcity in the supply of beauty when he was turned out."

"And an over-supply of red hair. His mother was a strawberry blonde. Well, I'd like to know how things are coming on with Bob. He hasn't been caught yet, that's certain, or the news would be in the papers."

"They'll never catch him out West, and I've money to bet on it."

"You're reckless with your funds. Why are you so sure?"

"Because he isn't out West."

"How do you know he isn't? Did you get a letter from him or from his sister?"

"No. I don't know where he is any more than you do, but as I am certain he is not guilty of stealing the bonds, there was no need for him to go West."

"If he didn't steal the bonds why is he staying away?"
Because he can't help himself."

"That's what you said before. If he couldn't help himself he couldn't send for his sister. And if he could send for his sister he could have sent us an explanation. It seems to me you're away off in your figuring."

"It's a question in my mind whether he ever sent for his sister."

"It is? Why the detective reported that she had left the city and gone West, apparently to join Bob, for there could be no other reason for her hasty departure."

"I've always said that the detectives are on the wrong scent. We know they made one mistake."

"They ought to know their business."

"They probably do, but they're not infallible."

"They must have a pretty good clue or Sam Burkett wouldn't have gone West looking for Bob and the bonds."

"There is no use of our arguing the matter as the case stands, so let's talk about something else."

"All right. Where are you going on Decoration Day?"

"I couldn't tell you. I have something else to think about at present."

"Seeing that it's a week from Monday, it's about time you began to consider the matter. I'd like to go with you to some place where we could have a good time."

"I may have some business on my hands."

"Business—on a holiday!"

"Business before pleasure always," smiled Will.

"Oh, you go bag. What are you giving me?" snorted Dick.

"Are you through eating?"

"Yes."

"Let's go, then. I've got to run over to the office for something I left there. Come along," said Will.

They walked through the ground floor of the Eclipse Building and caught the only elevator that was running.

That dumped them out on the floor, and they walked around to the corridor where their office was.

As they drew up before the door of the reception-room Will saw the shadow of a man projected against the frosted glass of the boss' private room door.

He concluded that one of the janitor's assistants was in there cleaning up.

"Open the door, Dick," he said. "It's not locked."

"The dickens it isn't," replied Dick, trying the knob and finding the door fast. "It's locked, all right."

"That's funny. The janitor is in there."

"Is he? Then he's locked himself in."

"He probably forgot to put back the catch. Open it with your key."

Dick proceeded to do so, and made quite a noise.

Immediately Will heard an object like a chair pushed against the door of the private room, and looking, he saw

the shadow of a man mount on it, then raise his foot upon the back of it.

Glancing up he saw the wide transom, which was closed, swing into a horizontal position, and then saw and heard the person inside climb higher.

The head, shoulders and arms of a thin, smoothly shaven man came out through the narrow space under the transom frame.

He wasn't the janitor, that was certain.

He was a perfect stranger, and Will didn't fancy his looks any more than he did his actions, which were decidedly suspicious.

The moment the man looked down and saw Will, for Dick had opened the door and entered, he started to get back.

This was not so easily accomplished, for the inside end of the transom had tilted and caught him in the back, and in his efforts to retreat his coat crumpled up into a bunch that caused him to stick in the aperture, where he struggled like a cockchafer impaled on a pin.

"Here, Dick, come here—quick!" cried Will.

His insistent tones brought his fellow messenger back in a hurry.

"Look at that fellow. He's got no business in our office when it's closed up. He must be a thief. Grab him before he can get free."

The boys sprang forward and gripped the man by the arm.

"Pull!" cried Will to his companion.

"Let go, will you?" cried the fellow, struggling to free himself.

"Not much," replied the boys, pulling all the harder.

At that moment an A. D. T. messenger came springing up the stairs, and a tenant of one of the adjoining offices appeared in the corridor.

They stopped and looked in astonishment at the strange sight.

The man in the transom was struggling and swearing at a great rate, while the two messengers were pulling away with all their might.

It was certainly a curious tug-of-war.

CHAPTER VI.

WILL MAKES AN ASTONISHING DISCOVERY.

"What's the trouble here?" asked the gentleman, coming closer.

"We caught this chap trying to crawl out of our office through the transom," replied Will. "That looked suspicious enough for us to grab him. He'll have to explain why he was locked inside, and what he was doing in there. Dick, go and find the janitor. I'll hold on to this fellow."

Dick hurried over to the elevator shaft.

"It's all a mistake," said the man, glaring down at Will.

"Yes, it was a mistake for you to try and get out that way when the door is more convenient and proper," replied the boy. "Who are you, anyway?"

"Let go of my arm and I'll tell you."

"Couldn't think of it. I've got you and I'm going to—"

The man gave a sudden tug and got his arm loose.

Then he gave Will a shove and tumbled to the floor inside with a crash.

Will made a dive for the open door, rushed in and made for the door of the private room.

He found it locked on the inside.

He rushed back to the corridor, but only in time to see the man open the front door, dart out, upset the district telegraph messenger and spring down the stairs, two steps at a time.

Will put after him like a shot.

He was just as spry as the boy, however, and kept ahead of him.

When he reached the head of the last flight, instead of following it he darted off down the corridor like a hare.

Will followed in hot pursuit.

The fellow turned into the cross corridor that led to the back of the building, and continued on like a winged Mercury.

Will now began to overhaul him, and was feeling confident that he would have the man in another moment or two, when the fugitive slipped on something and went down like a sack of potatoes.

It happened so quick that Will couldn't stop, and he pitched right over his body, and went rolling toward the nearest wall, against which he fetched up with a whack that made him see stars.

The fugitive picked himself up, and with a sarcastic laugh rushed around into the rear corridor that led to the back stairs.

Down these he flew, and was out of the building before Will was able to take up the chase again.

Will didn't give up, but hurried down to Pine street.

He saw the man nearing the corner of William street. He darted after him as fast as he could go.

Before he had covered thirty feet the fellow vanished around the corner.

When Will reached the corner himself the fugitive was not in sight.

He kept on at a reduced pace part of the way down the block and then came to a stop.

"He's gone into one of these entrances, probably to hide until he thinks the coast is clear. I'll mount guard here and watch. Maybe I'll catch him napping," said the boy to himself.

Will waited and watched for some time, but the man did not appear.

"If he's in one of these buildings he seems to be in no hurry to leave," muttered Will, impatiently. "Dick must be wondering where I have gone. He was doubtless surprised when he got back to find that the situation was greatly changed from what he left it. That messenger will tell him what happened. I was a great chump to let that rascal play a march on me. When I heard him fall I thought I would have him dead to rights. I didn't imagine for a moment that he had locked himself into the private room. Hello! By George, here he comes now out of that entrance on the other side. I'll have him as sure as beans."

Will drew back out of sight as he saw the fellow look toward Pine street.

When he looked out the fugitive was walking rapidly toward the corner.

Will cut across and started to overhaul him.

There was a saloon on the corner and the man went in. "Going to have a drink," chuckled Will.

When he reached the corner he looked into the saloon and saw the man standing at the bar, and the bar-keeper was drawing a glass of lager.

"I won't tackle him in there. I'll wait till he comes out and then lay hold of him. If he gets away from me again he'll be clever," thought Will.

The young messenger stepped into the doorway adjoining the saloon and waited.

When the man didn't come out in a reasonable time he looked into the saloon again.

To his surprise and disgust the man was not there.

He rushed in and asked the bar-keeper where the fellow had gone.

"The man who just had the beer?" asked the bar-keeper.

"Yes."

"Oh, he went out by the side door."

"The dickens!" exclaimed Will, making a dash for that exit.

He looked down the street, and he thought he recognized the man at a distance crossing the street diagonally toward the corner of Pearl.

He chased after him at a quick walk.

The man in question turned up Pearl, and Will lost sight of him for the time being.

There were quite a number of people on Pearl street, and the stores and warehouses were all open and doing business.

Will closed in on the suspected party and recognized him as the man he was after.

The young messenger now began to realize that to stop him so far away from the Eclipse Building and charge him with his conduct at the office was liable to make a disturbance in the street.

The man would doubtless deny that he was the person who had been in the office, and Will had no means of proving that he was without Dick's corroborative backing.

"It's a question whether a policeman would do anything on my word alone," thought Will. "Even if a cop believed my story, and made him go back to the building, the chances are that Dick has gone off, and I couldn't do anything. I guess I'll confine my efforts to following him. Maybe I can shadow him to some place where he can be found at another time if Mr. Burkett, when he has heard my story, decides to take some action in the matter."

So Will kept the man in sight a little way ahead.

When Pearl street diverted to the left he kept on, following the line of the elevated road straight to Chatham square.

Here he mounted the steps of the elevated station, and Will followed.

Both took their seats in the same car and rode uptown.

At Thirty-fifth street the chap left the train, and so did Will.

The man walked over to Broadway, and Will followed him on the other side of the way.

When he turned up Broadway, the young messenger fell in behind him again.

At Forty-second street the fellow turned west and went as far as a certain gilded saloon, which he entered.

Will looked inside and saw him take a drink at the bar, after which he sat down at a table, picked up an afternoon paper and began to read.

His actions indicated that he expected to meet some one there.

Will hesitated what to do next.

Finally he decided to go in and make a bluff at waiting for somebody himself.

It would be necessary for him to take a drink to keep up appearances, so he called for a soda, drank it, and took possession of the table behind the man he was watching.

He picked up a paper, too, and pretended to read.

Suddenly he thought about the telegram he had picked out of the waste basket in his boss' office.

Now was as good as any time to look at it.

He pulled the paper out of his pocket, smoothed it out, and looked at the writing on it.

"This is what he read:

"JOHN BURKETT, No. — WALL STREET, NEW YORK: Traced Burton and sister to boarding-house here. Found they had left suddenly. Believe Chicago their destination. Leave for there to-night. Hope to nab him.

"SAM."

Will gasped, for here seemed plain evidence that Bob and his sister were West after all.

"Gee! It doesn't seem possible," he thought. "I was going to Redwood this afternoon to make further inquiries about that red auto, but it's too late to do that now. Bob certainly went to that village to deliver the bonds. He didn't deliver them, but disappeared as if wiped off the earth. Now it would appear that he's actually out West with Nellie. I can't believe it. In fact, I won't believe it unless he's ~~caught~~ ^{left} there and brought back a prisoner. In that case I'll have to believe that I've been awfully fooled in Bob."

As Will put the telegram back in his pocket a well-dressed, bearded man ^{came} into the saloon, looked around and walked over to the table where the chap Will had followed in the place was seated.

"Well, Jenkins, I see you've got back. What have you done?" he asked.

His voice sounded so familiar to Will that the boy, whose back was partially turned toward him, turned and cast a cautious look at him.

He didn't recognize the man as one he had ever seen before, though Dick was sure he knew somebody this stranger reminded him of.

"Hello, Sam. I didn't see you come in. Sit down, and after you've blown me off I'll let you know the particulars," replied Jenkins.

On hearing the first two words of that speech, Will remembered, quick as a flash, who it was the newcomer put him in mind of.

It was of the boss' nephew—Sam Burkett.

It was a singular coincidence that the stranger's name was Sam, too.

"What will you have?" asked the newcomer, beckoning to the waiter.

Jenkins said he'd take whisky.

The waiter got an order for two whiskies, and went to the bar to get them.

"Well, did you get into the office without trouble?" asked the new arrival.

"Why wouldn't I when you gave me the key?"

"How in creation did that man get a key to our office?" breathed Will, listening with both ears.

"And the safe in the private room, you had no difficulty with, I suppose, for I provided you with the combination."

Will was more astonished than ever at hearing that speech.

Who was this man who admitted possessing the combination of Mr. Burkett's private safe?

If the young messenger had not the evidence in his pocket that the broker's nephew was out West, in Cincinnati, and about to leave for Chicago, this man's voice and his statement about the combination of the safe would have caused him to suspect very strongly that he was Sam Burkett himself in disguise.

"No, I had no trouble with it, but I didn't get into it just the same!"

"Why not?" asked the other, sharply.

"I was interrupted."

"Interrupted! By the janitor?"

"No, by two boys who seemed to belong there."

"They must have been our messengers," said the other.

At the words "our messengers" Will pricked up his ears and the suspicion that there was something more than met the eye in the speaker was more strongly impressed on him than ever.

"I don't know who they were, but they made it pretty hot for me."

"How?"

Jenkins explained all that had happened, and told how he had given Will the slip.

"Then your visit was a failure?" said the bearded man in a displeased tone.

"I'm sorry to say it was."

"Hang it all, I counted on you getting possession of that package of Government bonds my uncle put in there the day I left the office on my bluff to go West."

Will almost gave a jump at those words.

This bearded man with the familiar voice was Sam Burkett after all.

What did it all mean and what game was he up to?

CHAPTER VII.

WILL PLAYS DETECTIVE.

To say that Will was astonished at the revelation would be putting it mildly.

He was fairly amazed to find Mr. Burkett's nephew and cashier in New York when the man was supposed to be out in Cincinnati at that very moment.

The fact that Sam Burkett had sent a man to the office, provided with the combination of his uncle's private safe, to take from that safe a package of Government bonds belonging to the broker, appeared to be plain evidence that the cashier was engaged in crooked work.

If he was capable of engaging in one piece of crooked business, why not in another?

"I'll bet a hat he's at the bottom of the stolen bonds affair, and to cover up his own tracks from the detectives has been the cause of throwing all the blame on Bob. This man Jenkins is clearly his accomplice, and he must have others in with him, too, one of whom he sent out West to personate himself, and keep the suspicion against Bob on edge. Well, talk about rascals! He's a clever one, but if I don't bring about his finish it will be a funny thing. I hope he won't get on to me here. I mustn't let him see my face."

Such was the tenor of Will's thoughts after the disguised Burkett made his last remark, and so quick did the boy's brain work that he did not lose the reply that Jenkins made, which was to the effect that he had done the best he could, but circumstances had been against him.

"I wonder what brought those boys back to the office after it was closed for the day?" said the cashier.

"I couldn't tell you," replied Jenkins.

"Well, it was infernal hard luck. I hate to lose that bunch of bonds. They are coupon ones, and I could easily sell them."

"When are you going to get rid of the others?"

"The others must mean the stolen D. & G. ones," thought Will.

"Not for awhile yet," replied the cashier. "It isn't safe to try to work them off while the hue and cry is on. I've got a plan I'll put into effect shortly through the office. The numbers of the bonds that I sent to the Western exchanges do not correspond with the stolen ones. That will prevent suspicion when the time comes."

"That's one of the advantages of being cashier, eh?" grinned Jenkins.

"Of course, and of enjoying the full confidence of the boss."

"It seems like a shame to rob one's uncle," chuckled Jenkins.

"Charity begins at home. I need the money."

"You're going back to the island, I suppose?"

"Not till to-morrow morning. I'm sick of the place. It's as quiet and lonesome as the country. I like life, and plenty of it."

"So you intend to spend the night on the Great White Way?"

"Why not? I only see it once a week now, and I have to travel under difficulties, for I can't mingle with my regular cronies, as I am supposed to be out West."

"Where shall I meet you to-night?"

"At the Empire Parlors, about nine."

"All right. I'll be there. Come up to the bar and I'll blow you."

The two men left the table and walked up to the bar, where they had a drink, and then walked out.

"Gee! I've made a great discovery," thought Will, as he got up and sauntered toward the entrance. "There isn't any doubt now that Bob is innocent of the crime laid at his door. The whole thing is a conspiracy on the part

of Sam Burkett. He is a nice rooster to rob his uncle of \$50,000 worth of bonds, and then try to pinch a lot of Government bonds on top of that. I suppose if I called on Mr. Burkett now, and told him what I have found out, he'd think it too incredible to believe. The telegram he got, which probably isn't the first he has received from the cashier's accomplice, would convince him that I was talking rag-time when I asserted that his nephew was right here in this town instead of in Cincinnati. Besides, he wouldn't believe that Sam Burkett is such a big rascal as my story would make him out to be. Well, I could go to the police and tell my facts, and they'd arrest the cashier at the Empire Parlors to-night when he gets there at nine. That would create something of a sensation for Mr. Burkett and Wall Street as well. Sam Burkett, however, might deny everything. He might assert that he left Cincinnati suddenly, after filing that dispatch, on a new clue that led him back to the city. Of course, the stolen bonds wouldn't be found on him, nor would he admit that he knew anything about the whereabouts of Bob. Bob and his sister are on that island he spoke about, as sure as fate. I wish I knew where the island was. There are scores of islands within a short distance of this city. It would be a pretty harb job for even a smart detective to spot the right one. Well, I'm going home, and I'll figure out just what course I'd better pursue."

By the time he had finished his dinner that evening he had decided to go down to the Empire Parlors and keep a watch on the disguised cashier.

His mind was made up to discover where that island was if it was possible for him to do it.

As Sam Burkett knew him so well he made a few alterations in his dress, and put on a false mustache he had in one of his drawers.

This made him look older, and he believed it would deceive the cashier if the man caught sight of him.

He left the house about a quarter past eight and took a Sixth avenue elevated train for the Forty-second street station.

At nine o'clock he was seated in one of the chairs in the Empire Parlors, watching the players apparently, but really keeping his attention on the door, for he had already ascertained that Sam Burkett had not yet reached the place.

It wasn't long before he saw a man enter whom he recognized as Jenkins.

Fully twenty minutes passed before the disguised cashier made his appearance.

Jenkins was on the lookout for him, and the two men came together.

They walked over to one of the boxes provided with curtains, where some of the customers retired when they wanted to drink and talk in private.

The cashier let the curtains down after they entered, and presently a waiter went over and took their order.

When he walked off to the bar, Will sauntered over and entered the next box on the right.

He did not drop either of the curtains, but leaned against the wall with his ears on the alert.

It happened that two of the partition boards had sprung, leaving a slight aperture through which the conversation between the two men easily reached the boy's ear.

They had turned on the electric light and taken a pack of cards from a drawer of the round table.

While they played a game of pinochle they talked.

For awhile their conversation had no special interest for the listener.

At length Jenkins said:

"How are you making out with your prisoners, Sam?"

"All right," replied the cashier.

"Are they giving you much trouble?"

"None at all. They can't get out of the cave to save their lives, for there is only one way of getting in and out of it, and that is through a trap-door at the top under the floor of the hut. They couldn't reach it without a ladder, and there is none in the place."

"But you visit them, don't you?"

"No."

"How do you feed them, then?"

"I let their food down to them in a basket by means of a rope."

"Does the clerk know you are responsible for the imprisonment of himself and his sister?"

"He does not. He thinks they have fallen into the hands of a gang of crooks who are keeping them prisoners until they get rid of the stolen bonds."

"Then if they made their escape by accident the clerk would have no suspicion that you are mixed up in the business?"

"Not the slightest. No fear, however, of them making their escape."

They talked about the prisoners for awhile, but nothing they said gave Will the least clue to the situation of the island.

"The only way I can locate it is by following Burkett back," thought the boy. "But he isn't going there till tomorrow morning, so how shall I manage the matter?"

Will decided that he must not lose sight of the cashier until he had traced him to the place where he intended to pass the night.

Then he must resume the watch in the morning, and when Burkett made his reappearance, shadow him wherever he went.

That was easier figured on than carried out.

Many things might happen to queer his plan.

However, he saw no better course to pursue.

When the men left the Empire Parlors, Will followed them.

They led him a march for several hours, during which they visited many saloons.

Finally about two in the morning they parted in front of the Times Square Hotel, Burkett walked to the desk, got his room key, and took the elevator upstairs.

Will walked up to the desk.

"Who is that gentleman who just got his key?" he asked the clerk.

"Samuel Walker," replied the clerk, after consulting a ticket.

"When did he arrive?"

"There's the book. You can look it up for yourself."

Walker's name was down among that day's arrivals, and from its position Will judged that he came during the forenoon.

"That's all I can do now," thought the boy. "I'll be on

hand in the morning to finish my business with Mr. Sam Burkett."

Will left the hotel and went straight home.

He judged that after the cashier's all-night splurge he would not make a very early start for the island, so he did not get down to the hotel till nearly ten o'clock.

The regular day clerk was at the desk.

"Is Mr. Walker in his room?" Will asked him.

"Walker? No. The gentleman has left."

"Left!" cried the discomfited young messenger.

"Yes. Something over an hour ago."

Will knew it was no use asking where "Walker" had gone, for, of course, the clerk didn't know.

He just walked outside, feeling that he was all at sea so far as the cashier was concerned.

"It would be as easy to find a needle in a haystack as to overtake him now. He's gone back to the island and I'm dished. Well, never mind, he'll return to the city soon again, for he says he can't keep away from life—the life of upper Broadway. I'll call at the hotel toward the end of the week and see if he has registered. In the meantime poor Bob and his sister have to face another week of their imprisonment. That can't be helped. How glad they would be if they knew I was working to effect their release and bring their jailor to the justice he so richly deserves."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE NAPHTHA LAUNCH.

On Monday Will met Dick in the corridor of the office building.

"Hello, old man," said Dick. "That chap we nabbed got away from you while I was looking for the janitor, and the telegraph boy told me that you chased after him."

"That's right," nodded Will.

"Did you catch him?"

"No, I didn't catch him," replied Will, who did not intend to tell Dick about all that he had found out on Saturday afternoon and evening.

"So he got away. Too bad. He must have been a crook. He didn't steal anything, for the janitor and I examined the office thoroughly. We came upon him just in time to queer his little game, whatever it was."

"There's no doubt of that," replied Will.

"You'll tell the boss about it when he comes down?"

"Yes."

They entered their office, and when the broker made his appearance about half-past nine Will told him about Saturday afternoon's incident, concluding his story at the point where Jenkins had first eluded him.

Mr. Burkett communicated with the police, and furnished them with the man's description, as given by Will.

All that day the center of interest at the Exchange continued to be L. & M.

It went up to 107, and the lambs went crazy over it.

A tremendous amount of the stock exchanged hands, and from that fact Will judged that the insiders were unloading on the general public, and that a slump was likely to set in soon.

"I think I couldn't do better than become a bear from the looks of things," he said to himself more than once that day.

When he went to the bank with the day's deposits he rushed into the little bank and asked for his statement.

It was handed to him, with a check for a little over \$1,600.

That showed he had cleared \$1,100 on the deal.

L. & M. was then ruling at 107 3-8.

That was three points higher than he sold at.

He immediately ordered 150 shares of the stock sold at the market price.

He put up \$1,500 to cover the transaction.

"One man's meat is another man's poison," he said to himself as he left the bank and started for a lunch-house to get a hasty meal—a sandwich and a cup of coffee. "I can't win unless the lambs lose. I'm betting \$1,500 that they hit the toboggan in a day or two. I feel sorry to wish them bad luck, but as Sam Burkett remarked on Saturday, charity begins at home. I need the money."

Will worked till half-past five that afternoon.

He was doing so well in the counting-room after his messenger duties were over that Jones hinted to him that he was pretty sure to land in Bob's job.

Will smiled to himself.

"I guess it won't be long before Bob is at his desk again," he said to himself. "I'd like to be promoted all right, but I'm not looking for Bob's job."

About noon next day the slump that Will had counted on happened, and a small panic took place at the Exchange.

Inside of an hour L. & M. dropped ten points.

The bull interest, however, came to the rescue, and it recovered five.

The bulls were not equal to the strain, and it closed at par, which was a drop of seven points and a fraction for the day.

That gave Will a prospective profit of \$1,000, and naturally he felt good over his luck.

Every day after that marked a lower drop for the stock, and by Friday afternoon it was down to 87.

At that figure Will closed out his deal by buying in 150 shares to cover the stock he had sold at 107 3-8.

The result was that the slump made the young messenger \$3,000 richer.

That evening he called at the Times Square Hotel and looked over the register.

Samuel Walker's name did not appear on it.

"Well, maybe Burkett will be here to-morrow," he mused. "Saturday nights are probably the nights he likes to enjoy in town."

Twice during the week telegrams had come to the broker from the West.

Will was not in the office either time when the messenger delivered them, so he didn't know anything about them.

The messages were brief and both came from Chicago.

They were very unsatisfactory to Mr. Burkett, for the sender, whom he supposed to be his nephew, was always on the point of nabbing Bob Burton, the absconder, but always failed at the crucial moment.

The broker wondered why he had not received a letter from Sam, explaining matters in detail.

One telegram ended with the words "my letter will explain all."

Mr. Burkett hoped it would, but unfortunately the letter didn't arrive.

Another thing that bothered the broker was the fact that his presumed nephew never mentioned at what hotel he was stopping, so Mr. Burkett was unable to communicate with him, as he was anxious to do.

Thus matters stood on the Friday evening that Will called at the Times Square caravansary and failed to see the name "Walker" on the register.

The next morning Will came downtown full of hope that when he visited the hotel that afternoon he would find Sam Burkett in town again.

Nothing more having been published in the papers about the stolen D. & G. bonds, the brokers who had been interested in the outcome of the affair had forgotten all about it.

The city detectives had been called off the case, as it was understood that the guilty clerk had fled to the West and the broker was employing the police of that section of the country to capture him.

A third telegram for the broker came that morning, and Will signed for it.

When Mr. Burkett opened it he found that his nephew, as he supposed, had just started for San Francisco after Bob Burton and his sister.

As none of the stolen bonds were so far reported as having been sold by the absconder, it is possible that the broker wondered where his missing clerk got the funds to travel on so extensively with his sister.

He was not pleased to have his nephew go so far away as the Pacific slope, but then it was better he should do so if there was a chance of him recovering the \$50,000 worth of bonds, the loss of which had made such a big hole in his bank account.

The Stock Exchange had quieted down after the slump, and business was slack, as it generally is after the market gets a set-back.

The disgruntled lambs, at least that part of them who had been up against the slump, had retired into their shells, so to speak, and the Street wore a deserted look as compared with the past ten days.

We don't mean to say that it actually looked deserted, for it did not.

There is always lots of life in Wall Street, no matter how the market is going.

But when stocks are booming there is always a more animated appearance about the financial district.

Will and Dick thought the board-room looked rather dead that morning, because the excitement of the last few days was missing.

The former had made \$4,000 out of the boom and the succeeding slump, but the satisfaction he felt at such uncommon good fortune was somewhat overshadowed by the serious task he had on hand, namely, the rescue of his friend Bob Burton, and Nellie Burton, from their island imprisonment, and the exposure of Sam Burkett, as the chief factor of the stolen bonds.

"Well, how about Monday, Will?" asked Dick, as closing time approached. "Have you made up your mind about what you are going to do?"

"I've got some important business on hand, so I can't go anywhere with you," replied Will.

"It must be mighty important if you are going to devote a holiday to it."

"It is—the most important business I've ever undertaken in my life."

"All right. I'll count you out. I'm glad business doesn't bother me on a day when everybody is enjoying himself. You have my sympathy."

"Thanks. I hope the result will prove that I don't need it."

At that moment Dick was called on to go out, so their conversation ended.

It was nearly two o'clock when Will walked into the Times Square Hotel again and looked over the list of arrivals so far that day.

To his great disappointment the name of "Walker" was missing.

"He hasn't arrived yet, or else he's gone to another hotel," thought Will.

On reflection the young messenger didn't think that Sam Burkett would patronize a different hotel, so he could only conclude that he hadn't come to the city, or if he had, was in no hurry to come to the hotel.

Will hardly knew how to put in the afternoon.

He didn't care to go home, and there wasn't any fun to him in hanging around Times Square.

He walked over to the Empire Billiard Parlors and took a look around, but he found nothing there to interest himself.

Finally he decided to take a run over to the East River, and boarded a cross-town car that traversed Forty-second street.

Moored at the end of the dock was a large naphtha launch.

It was fitted with a glass-enclosed cabin aft, capable of holding six or eight persons comfortably.

It was steered by a wheel with brass-tipped spokes.

In the center of the craft was the engine which drove the boat.

It was protected by a sloping deck which arched over it, leaving an open well or cockpit, furnished with a circular seat for the man who manipulated the apparatus.

Forward in the bow was a small hatch opening.

The slide which covered it was now pushed forward, probably for the purpose of ventilating the interior.

Will regarded the little vessel with some admiration, for it sat the water with the buoyancy of a duck, and seemed an ideal craft in which to tour inland waterways.

He wondered who it belonged to, and whether it was waiting to take a party off somewhere on a short cruise over Decoration Day.

While he was gazing down at it a man, attired in a check blouse, crawled out from under the deck where the engine was.

He had a wrench in his hand, and Will judged he was the individual who attended to the motive power.

His hands were smeared with oil and dirt, and there was a smudge of oil on his face, which he partially removed with his sleeve.

He glanced up at the young messenger and then walked around to the cabin and looked into it.

After that he leaped on the dock and looked up toward the street.

"Say, young fellow," he said, turning to Will. "Are you goin' to stay around here for a few minutes?"

"I guess so. Why?" replied the boy.

"I want to go up to the head of the wharf on a little business. I wish you'd keep an eye on this boat and not let anybody go aboard of her," he said.

"All right, I don't mind obliging you."

"If a wagon comes down with some stuff, tell the man to put it down in that hole forward, will you?"

"I will."

The man walked off up the wharf.

Five minutes later a light wagon rolled down the dock. The driver alighted and looked down at the launch.

"You've brought something for this craft, haven't you?" asked Will.

"Yes. Are you in charge of her?"

"Yes. Take the things and put them down into that hole forward."

"What's the matter with you doing it? You get aboard and I'll hand them to you. They're light."

As Will thought he'd like to get a closer view of the boat, he consented.

He stepped on board, and then the young driver passed him down a quantity of groceries in a box.

He carried the box and left it alongside of the hole.

Another box of stuff followed.

"This is the last," said the driver, handing him down a case of bottled liquor.

Will carried that forward, too.

As the wagon drove away he stepped down into the hole and started to stow away the three boxes.

There was lots of room in the bow compartment, and he had no trouble in disposing of the boxes.

As he rose up to get out of the place he saw two men approaching the end of the pier.

Somewhat to his trepidation he recognized them as the disguised Sam Burkett and the man Jenkins.

On the spur of the moment he bobbed down out of sight.

Presently the little craft moved under the weight of a person stepping into her.

A second person followed.

Then he heard the cashier's voice addressing his companion.

"What do you think of the craft I've hired, Jenkins?" he said.

"She looks pretty good."

"She'll take us to the island in short order, for she goes like a streak."

"Gee!" breathed Will. "Here's my chance to find out where Bob and his sister are hidden; that is, if I'm not discovered aboard and fired off. I guess I'd better work that slide over the hole, and then maybe the chap in the blouse won't look down here."

He began pulling it over by degrees, until he had the hole covered all but an inch, which he left to admit the air.

The cashier and Jenkins were seated aft talking.

In a short time the man in the jumper returned.

"Got the stores aboard, Patterson?" asked Burdick.

"Yes, they're all right," replied the man, who had met the wagon returning, and been told by the driver that he

had delivered the stuff to a boy who was in charge, whom he had left stowing the boxes in a hole forward.

Not seeing Will, Patterson concluded he had gone off as soon as Burkett and Jenkins arrived.

"Unmoor, and we'll make a start," said the cashier.

Patterson lost no time in doing so, and in about five minutes took his place at the engine and started the boat ahead.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY AND OUT.

"We're off," muttered Will, as he felt the boat shoot ahead and heard the rush of the bow as it cut its way through the water.

It was a fine afternoon, with scarcely any wind, and the East River was almost as calm as a mill pond.

A slant of sunlight penetrated through the slight opening the boy left in the scuttle cover, and afforded him enough light to see his surroundings.

The launch shot up the river at great speed, taking the western channel between Blackwell's Island and the city.

Passing East River Park it entered Hell Gate like a shooting meteor, rounding the southern and easterly ends of Ward's Island.

Avoiding the small islands ahead it was ere long opposite College Point, with a wide and clear sweep of the river before it clear to the entrance of Long Island Sound.

During all this time Will sat with his back against the bulkhead that divided the space filled by the machinery from the hole in the bows.

After the first exciting sensations had passed off, Will began to wonder how his adventure was likely to end.

He had undertaken the trip on the spur of the moment, as soon as he discovered that the launch was bound for the island, whose location he was so anxious to learn.

He had not considered the difficulties, as well as risk, he would be up against as soon as the little craft reached her destination.

As soon as Sam Burkett and Jenkins became aware of his undesirable presence on board, and recognized him, they would surely handle him without gloves, because he would naturally be regarded as a menace to their stolen bond scheme.

What could he do against the pair of them, not to mention the man Patterson, who might be counted on to back them up?

The knowledge he obtained of the situation of the island would not count for much if he was captured and made a prisoner himself.

He would be as badly off as Bob and his sister were.

Well, he couldn't help that now.

He had crossed the Rubicon and had to take his chances.

It was about five o'clock when the man shut off power, and the launch, under its accumulated speed, darted in toward a small island not far from the imaginary line that divides New York State from Connecticut.

A wide channel separated the island from the main land.

It was covered with brush and trees that were putting forth their foliage.

Near the head of the cove into which the boat was shooting was a deserted looking hut of a story and a half.

Its boards were disclosed and weather-beaten, as if it had stood there a long time.

When Will felt the propeller stop he guessed that the launch was near its destination.

That meant the crisis for himself was at hand.

He decided that as soon as the boat stopped he would spring out of the hole and get ashore before he could be held up by the people on board.

He did not doubt but this could be easily accomplished, as the men would be taken by surprise.

Of course he expected to be immediately pursued, and on the size and formation of the island would depend how long he could elude capture.

He shoved the hatch cover back a few inches, and listening to the conversation of the men, he found that they were now close to the island.

The plan he intended to adopt was, however, interfered with.

Patterson stepped forward and, standing on the partly open hatch, picked up the forward mooring rope and a long boat-hook.

The launch, at gradually reduced speed, slipped into the cove, and the man stood ready to stick the hook into the sand to prevent the boat from jabbing its nose up on the beach.

This he presently accomplished, and the boat stopped.

Patterson then sprang ashore and attached the end of the line to a convenient tree.

He walked a few feet away and caught the stern line that Burkett flung to him.

Will now believed the time for action had arrived.

He stuck up his head and looked around.

Patterson was securing the stern line to another tree, after hauling the boat in close, while Burkett was stepping ashore, with Jenkins close behind him.

"If I could only get ashore without being seen, there are lots of trees that would conceal me in no time," thought Will. "Maybe if I wait, Burkett and his pal will go up to the hut, then I'll only have Patterson to buck against."

Will concluded to chance that, and bobbed down again.

"Get the stores out and fetch them up to the hut," said Burkett. "Come along, Jenkins."

The two started off, leaving the man standing on the beach.

He seemed in no hurry to unload the stores, for he took out his pipe, filled and lighted it, and began to smoke.

Burkett and Jenkins did not enter the hut, though the latter paused to glance inside, but continued on around it, disappearing among the trees.

Hearing nothing for a few minutes, Will ventured to pop his head up again.

Patterson uttered an ejaculation of surprise, for he was staring straight at the launch.

Will saw he had been observed, so he rose right up and put his feet on the deck.

"What in thunder are you doing down there?" cried the man. "How came you to be aboard?"

"You carried me away from the city."

"Why, you're the chap I set to watch the launch while I went up the dock."

"I'm the party," admitted Will.

"I suppose you hid down there to get a sail. You've got a great nerve. I don't know what the boss'll say when he hears about it."

"You don't have to tell him. You're going back, aren't you, after you land the three boxes?"

"I'm goin' back when I get orders to do so."

"Want me to help you get the boxes ashore?"

"You can hand them out of the hole."

Will jumped back into the compartment and lifted the boxes out one by one.

Then the man stepped forward and took them from him, laying them down on the beach.

"Now get down and fetch me up the screw-driver you'll find there," said Patterson.

As his object was to conciliate the man, Will did as he was requested.

No sooner had his head disappeared, and he began to look around for the implement, than Patterson jumped aboard, pulled the cover tight over his head and fastened it with a loud chuckle.

Will did not need to be told that he had been made a prisoner, for the fact was patent to him.

It made him mad, however, to think how neatly he had been trapped.

The screw-driver was evidently a shrewd device on the man's part to get him below again.

"Gee! This is tough luck. Here I'm caged like a rat in a trap, to be taken out and exhibited before Burkett and his pal, I suppose, later on, then I'll probably see my finish in some way. I wish I had followed my first plan and made a break for the trees, as I might easily have done. I could have given them a run at any rate, and if I was eventually captured I wouldn't feel so cheap as I do now," muttered Will to himself.

He was now shut up in the dark, and lack of ventilation soon made the place feel stuffy and hot.

Twenty minutes passed before anything happened, then Patterson jumped on board, shoved the cover back, letting in a grateful rush of fresh air, as well as light, and told Will to come out.

The young messenger obeyed, Patterson assisting him up by grabbing him by the collar of his jacket, and then transferring his grip to his arm.

Before him on the bench stood the disguised cashier and his associate in rascality.

Both recognized Will at once, the former in no little consternation.

Jenkins uttered a smothered imprecation, for he saw in the lad the boy who had helped to spoil the job he had been sent to the office to pull off.

"This is the chap who hid below to steal a sail," said Patterson. "What are you goin' to do with him? Shall I take him over to the shore and turn him adrift to find his way back to the city as best he can?"

Burkett was so surprised to find that one of the office messengers, and particularly the one who was a warm friend of Bob Burton's, had accompanied them in a sly way on their trip to the island, that he didn't know just what to do.

"Hold on to him, Patterson," he said. "Don't let him get away from you. I'll decide in a moment what disposition to make of him. Come this way, Jenkins; I want to talk with you."

The two rascals retired out of earshot to consult, as Will guessed, upon his fate.

It was probable that the cashier suspected that Will had a purpose in stowing himself aboard the launch, for he was not a boy who would be likely to take such means as he did for the mere pleasure of a sail.

It struck him that Will might have penetrated his identity, and was following him to see why he was disguised.

Doubtless the boy thought it extremely odd that he should be in this vicinity when he was supposed to be out West looking for the clerk charged with the theft of the D. & G. bonds.

Of course, Burkett didn't know for certain that Will had recognized him, but he feared he had.

At any rate, he couldn't afford to take any chances.

The result of the conference between him and Jenkins was that it was decided to hold Will a prisoner on the island with the other two.

It was one more mouth to feed, but that didn't greatly matter.

Will would be missed, and the police would no doubt be asked to look for him, but there wasn't one chance in a thousand that he would be traced to the island.

To Jenkins was delegated the job of dealing with him.

So Burkett walked off toward the hut, and Jenkins returned to the beach.

"Well, young man," he said, addressing Will, "I guess you know me."

"I have seen you before under rather strenuous circumstances," replied the young messenger, coolly.

Jenkins grinned in an unpleasant way.

"I suppose you piped me off on the pier and followed me with the idea of seeing if you could do what you failed to do last Saturday?"

Will guessed the remark was merely a feeler, and made no reply.

"You were just a little too smart, so I'll have to teach you how to mind your own business after this," continued Jenkins.

He jumped aboard the launch and went into the cabin. He returned presently with a piece of thin line in his hand.

"Hold his arms behind his back while I tie them," he said to Patterson.

The man pulled the boy around and reached for his other arm.

Quick as a flash Will wrenched himself free and punched Patterson in the stomach so hard that the man doubled up with a howl.

The young messenger then whacked Jenkins a back-handed blow in the face.

The rascal staggered back, lost his balance and fell backward into the water.

Without the loss of a moment Will sprang ashore and darted for the shelter of the trees.

CHAPTER X.

HIDE AND SEEK.

Burkett saw the whole occurrence and he rushed forward to head Will off.

The boy dodged him easily and disappeared into the wood.

The cashier made no attempt to follow him alone, but shouted to Patterson, who was pulling Jenkins out of the water.

The discomfited crook was soaking wet and as mad as a hornet.

Burkett waited impatiently for them to come up to where he stood.

"You're pretty fellows," he said, sarcastically, "to let that boy get away from you. I thought you had hold of him, Patterson?"

"I did have hold of him, but he took me by surprise and wriggled out of my grasp. Then he fetched me a soak in the stomach that took all the breath and strength out of me for a moment."

"And he knocked me into the water," said Jenkins, with an imprecation.

"Well, he's gone into the wood. We've got to catch him," said the cashier.

"Why didn't you pull your gun on him?" growled Jenkins. "That would have stopped him."

"I didn't want to shoot him."

"You needn't have fired. You might have threatened to do so."

"You go into the hut and take off your clothes. You'll find an old suit up in the loft where the beds are. Patterson and I will chase this chap."

Burkett and Patterson entered the wood and began to beat around the thick brush for Will.

It was no easy job to find a fugitive in the place.

At any rate, they saw no signs of the boy, though they went through to the other side, which was not far, and looked in all directions.

The boy was there just the same, hiding under cover, and he didn't have to move to avoid them, for they did not come within several yards of his place of concealment.

Disappointed in not finding any trace of him, they came back by two different routes.

Will had no trouble in keeping out of their way, and they failed again.

Burkett decided to wait till Jenkins joined them.

He figured that the three ought to be able to catch the fugitive.

Will crawled to the edge of the wood to see what they were doing.

He saw them standing near the door of the hut talking.

"I wonder what they intend to do next?" he thought. "I'll bet Burkett is mad. I hope to give them plenty of work catching me. It's my opinion they won't succeed this afternoon, for it'll soon be dark, and then they won't be able to catch sight of me at all. While they're holding off I think I'll take a look around this wood and see if I can find a safe spot to roost to-night."

He started away with this idea in view, making as little noise as possible.

He roamed around for a matter of fifteen minutes, and then he heard sounds which indicated that his enemies were after him again.

At that moment he stepped into a little gully that ran down to the shore.

The upper end was clogged up with brush.

He concluded to squeeze himself into it and let his pursuers do all the hustling.

He followed this plan and was soon out of sight.

After a time Jenkins, who had joined the other two, came to the gully.

He looked at the dense brush and concluded that it offered a fine place of concealment.

"I'll take a look at it. Maybe that lad is hiding there," he said to himself.

Will couldn't see him from where he sat crouched, and the first intimation he had that one of the enemy was near was when Jenkins started to bore his way into the place.

The boy couldn't get out, so he had to run the risk of being caught there.

Jenkins came on slowly, but fortunately he diverged somewhat from the direct course, because he couldn't tell where he was going.

He found the job so disagreeable that he finally stopped and decided to go back.

One of his feet came within an inch of the boy's leg.

On the spur of the moment Will reached down and gave his ankle a sharp pinch.

Jenkins let out a roar and kicked out, narrowly missing Will's body.

"Oh, I'm bitten by a snake," cried the rascal, beating a retreat as quick as he could.

Will chuckled at the success of his device.

He heard the voices of Burkett and Patterson calling to Jenkins, as they hurried up, thinking he had caught the fugitive.

When the three came together, Jenkins swore he had been bitten by a snake, or some venomous insect, and he went down to the shore to examine his ankle and bathe it, the others following him.

It was getting dark fast now, so they gave up the pursuit.

"He'll be starved out and then we'll have no trouble catching him," said the cashier.

So the party returned to the hut, got their boxes of stores and liquor from the beach, and proceeded to get supper for themselves.

Besides what they brought from New York there was the remains of a leg of mutton, which Patterson had got from the nearby village on the Connecticut shore, and the greater part of a large cooked ham.

There was a small stove in the hut, and they had no difficulty in frying some eggs and making a large pot of coffee.

It was dark when they sat down to their meal, with a candle stuck in the neck of a bottle for illumination.

They ate and talked, unconscious that they were being observed through the window by the boy who had eluded them.

Will was pretty hungry himself by that time, for he had eaten only a light lunch before he went uptown.

Seeing the three men making merry over a very comfortable meal made him all the more hungry.

But there was nothing for him to do but grin and bear it.

At last the men finished their meal, then Burkett went to a corner of the room, opened a trap in the floor, and taking hold of a line that was attached to the under part of the trap, pulled up a basket.

He took several empty plates out of it and replaced them with other plates filled with food.

To these he added two cups of hot coffee.

Then he lowered the basket down and called out to some one below.

After leaning over the open trap a few minutes he shut it down and returned to the table, which had been cleared off by Patterson.

The cashier produced a box of cigars, out of which he and Jenkins helped themselves.

Then they walked outside and went down to the launch, which they boarded, and took their seats in the glass-framed cabin.

Will had observed all that happened inside the hut, and he knew that Bob and his sister were confined in the cellar or cave beneath the house.

How he was going to rescue them was a problem.

Another problem was the question of grub for himself. He couldn't subsist on air.

He could manage to pull through till next morning, but as he wasn't accustomed to going without his dinner in the evening, he felt a decided craving for a square meal right then.

If Patterson took himself off, too, Will intended to steal into the hut and make a raid on the larder.

At that moment the man was washing up the dishes and taking the job easy.

Will watched him through the window, wondering when he would get through.

Everything comes to an end some time, and so after awhile Patterson finished up.

He filled and lighted his pipe and walked outside for a smoke.

The candle was left burning on the table.

Patterson walked slowly down to the shore.

"Now is my time," thought Will; "I may not get such a chance again."

He crawled up to the half open door and sneaked into the hut.

The food had been put away in a closet in a corner of the room.

Will made straight for that, opened the door and looked to see what he could get away with.

The remains of the mutton, part of a loaf of bread and a package of crackers attracted his attention.

He grabbed them pretty quick.

There were several quart bottles of root beer on the floor, probably intended for the prisoners.

Will took one of them.

With his arms full the boy started for the door.

He was about to make his exit when he heard the voices of the cashier and Jenkins close at hand outside.

As things stood it was impossible for him to make his

escape without being seen, and with his arms full of food he would be at a great disadvantage.

"I'm nabbed this time sure," he breathed.

CHAPTER XI.

CAUGHT UNAWARES.

At that critical moment, just as the two men were about to enter, the candle gave an expiring flash and suddenly went out.

Nothing could have been more fortunate for Will.

Burkett and Jenkins walked inside in the dark, and as soon as they were a few feet from the door, Will whipped out, dodged around the hut and made for the furthest point in the wood.

Here he sat down and made a hearty meal, washing the food down with copious draughts of the ginger beer.

"I tell you that tasted as good as a banquet. I feel like a fighting cock now. I've got enough left over, besides the crackers, for another meal. I must wrap it up in my hand-kerchief and put it where I can find it. I guess under the bushes in the gulley is as good a place as I know of."

Having disposed of the food, Will started back for the hut to see what was going on there.

Looking through the window he found that a fresh candle ornamented the neck of the bottle, and that the two men were playing cards.

Patterson was still outside somewhere.

Fearing that that individual might come upon him unawares, Will abandoned the window and went looking for him.

He saw the glow of a pipe aboard of the launch, and then he knew where the man was.

He returned to the window and tried to hear what the cashier and his pal were talking about.

Finally Burkett got up, went to the door and looked out.

"He's aboard the launch," he said. "While he's out of the way I'll show you the bonds."

He went to a corner of the room, removed a board and pulled out a package.

"There's the stolen bonds," he said. "They're worth, as I've told you, something over \$51,000. The Government bonds you failed to get, on account of those boys, have a value of over \$10,000. It's a pity you missed the trick, for ten thousand is not to be sneezed at."

"I wouldn't mind having half of it now," replied Jenkins. "I don't think I'd be out here on the Sound. Life has rather a sugary attraction for me as well as for yourself. When are you going to turn up at the office again?"

"Not for awhile yet. I found a letter from my associate out West awaiting me at the hotel. He said that, following my instructions, he was about to telegraph my uncle that the trail of the bond thief was leading him to San Francisco. However, he is not really going there. That's only a bluff to give me a little more time away from the office. When I'm ready I'll telegraph him to come back. Then I'll report my non-success to my uncle, get rid of the bonds, clean up as much as I can of my uncle's cash, and

after squaring up with you and the other two, take a steamer for Europe and lose myself in the giddy whirl of the Continent."

Will looked at the bunch of securities the cashier exhibited to Jenkins.

These were the stolen bonds.

If he could only recover them for his employer, as well as rescue Bob and his sister, it would make him pretty solid with Mr. Burkett, and give him something of a reputation in the Street.

He watched the cashier wrap them up again and put them away under the loose board in the corner of the hut.

"I know now where they are hidden, and it won't take me but a few moments to get hold of them when the chance comes my way," thought Will.

Burkett got out a bottle of liquor and a couple of glasses, and the two men helped themselves to a fresh cigar.

Patterson came in and was invited to have a drink and take a hand in the card game.

Will saw that he wouldn't gain anything by remaining at the window, so he retired to the wood again.

He sat down within sight of the shore and began forming plans for the immediate future.

He was satisfied that the men would make a determined hunt for him in the morning, and as the island was so small, he feared they would be successful.

"I must do something to-night if I can," he figured. "I'm afraid they'll keep a watch because I'm on the island. Sam Burkett has too much at stake to take any chances. If one of them remains awake I won't be able to do anything."

When Will judged that an hour had gone by, he went back to the hut to see how things were going on there.

The three men were still at the table playing, drinking and smoking, so he returned to the wood to pass away another hour.

The silence of the place, and the monotonous lap of the water on the beach, made him drowsy, and it required an effort to keep his eyes open.

He got up and walked entirely around the island by way of the beach.

He saw the dark smudge of the Connecticut shore not such a great distance away, where many lights shone feebly through the gloom of the not over clear night.

As the night advanced the air grew chillier, and Will had to keep on the move in order to feel comfortable.

He visited the hut again, but there was no change.

"I wonder when they intend to turn in?" he thought.

As far as matters looked there seemed to be no immediate prospect of them doing so.

Burkett and Jenkins were accustomed to keeping late hours.

They never went to bed in the city until after midnight, and often three o'clock in the morning found them playing cards together in a back room of some resort that at that hour was closed to the general public.

Will, on the contrary, was in bed at eleven, except on some special occasion, consequently he found it difficult to keep awake.

He had no idea of the hour, but as the lights gradually went out on the shore of Connecticut, he figured that it was getting late.

Occasionally he saw moving lights on the Sound, and knew they were attached to vessels going east or west.

He visited the launch once.

"If I knew how to run a boat of this kind it would be easy for me to run over to the shore, get assistance and capture these three rascals. Then it would be easy for me to recover the stolen bonds and set Bob and his sister free," he said.

He wondered that Burkett wasn't afraid he would run off with the boat; but the fact was Patterson had fixed the motive power so that it couldn't be started even if Will knew how to manage the boat.

It was after midnight when Will paid another visit to the back window of the hut.

When he looked in he found that the card game had broken up and Burkett, with Jenkins, were going up to the loft to turn in.

Patterson closed and secured the door.

Then he drew a mattress in front of it, which he unrolled and spread out.

He straightened out a couple of blankets on it, and after removing his outer garments, put out the light and turned in.

"I guess they're not going to keep any watch," thought the boy. "It isn't necessary for them to do so, for the only entrance to the house is through the door, and that is now effectually blocked up. I might as well go to roost somewhere, for I can't do anything to-night."

So Will retired to the wood much disappointed, and somewhat fearful that the morning would see his finish.

He burrowed his way into the brush at the head of the gully, which afforded the best place for concealment on the island, and inside of ten minutes was sound asleep.

He may have been dreaming of the reputation he expected to make by recovering the stolen bonds, and the satisfaction of demonstrating that he alone of all the office force was right in asserting that Bob Burton was innocent of the theft that was charged to him, when a crashing sound in the brush awakened him.

He opened his eyes to the flashing light of a lantern that made him blink.

Then a hand gripped him by the arm and he was unceremoniously yanked to his feet by Patterson, while right before him in the brush stood Sam Burkett and his associate, Jenkins, looking at him with great satisfaction.

CHAPTER XII.

HOIST BY HIS OWN PETARD.

"So we've nabbed you at last," chuckled the disguised cashier.

Will said nothing.

He was not thoroughly awake, but was conscious that he was in the hands of his enemies.

Still it might be an unpleasant turn of his dream.

"Fetch him along, Patterson," said Burkett, "and see that he does not give you the slip again."

"If he does you can throw me into the Sound," replied the man, grimly.

Will was dragged from the friendly shelter of the brush into the gully, and thence along the shore to the hut.

By that time he was fully awake.

How it came about that his enemies had started out to hunt for him in the darkness, after he had seen them retire, as he thought, for the night, was a mystery to him; and it was also an astonishing thing to him that they had found his retreat, unless it was through the merest accident.

The fact of the matter was that Burkett and Jenkins, while undressing, got to talking about the best plan to adopt in the morning for the capture of the fugitive.

Jenkins remarked that the brush at the head of the gully was a likely spot for the boy to crawl into.

"I thought it was a snake or some insect that bit me until I looked at my ankle and saw that there was no trace of a bite," he said. "It must have been a sharp twig that stuck me. If I had pushed well around in the place I'll bet I'd have routed him out, and then we'd have caught him. However, we can go there in the morning and beat the whole place over."

"Your suggestion is a good one, but I've got a better idea. Dress yourself and we'll put it into practice."

"What's your idea?"

"We'll go to that brush now."

"What, in the dark?"

"The lantern will give us light enough. It has just occurred to me that the boy will go in there to sleep to-night. It's nearly one o'clock now, so we can calculate he is as sound as a bell by this time, and won't hear us moving around. If he is there we'll nab him, and that will save us all the trouble of hunting through the wood for him in the morning," said Burkett.

Jenkins agreed with him.

They went downstairs, aroused Patterson, and soon afterwards the three rascals left the hut en route for the brush at the head of the gulley.

The result of their enterprise proved that the cashier had guessed correctly, and, as we have seen, Will was captured without any trouble at all.

He was marched into the hut and securely tied to one of the chairs.

"Now, young man, you will stay there till morning, and then we'll decide what we will do with you," said Burkett.

"Pretty rough way to treat a fellow for taking a ride aboard your launch without your permission," said Will, as a feeler.

"Oh, we don't care anything about that, though we didn't want you aboard. The fact is, I am doing this to oblige my friend Jenkins. You handled him without gloves, you and your companion, a week ago, in the Eclipse Building, and he feels that he won't be satisfied unless he gets square with you."

"Perhaps he'll explain why he was in Broker Burkett's office after it was shut up for the afternoon, and what he was doing there. If I think his explanation satisfactory, I'll apologize for my conduct," replied Will.

"You've got a pretty good nerve, young fellow," said Jenkins, "but it won't help you any. I owe you something for knocking me into the water this afternoon. What did you do that for?"

"Because you intended tying my arms."

"You might have put up with that, then, for you're tied pretty tight now. You would have had supper with the rest of us, but now you'll have to go hungry till morning."

"I'm no worrying about that. I don't feel hungry."

"Don't you? Then you're not blessed with a healthy appetite."

"I guess we'll turn in now. It's after one," said the cashier.

The two men turned around and walked up to the loft once more, while Patterson proceeded to make his bed again.

When he was ready to turn in he looked at the boy's bonds, and, satisfied he could not free himself, he blew out the lantern and went to bed.

In about five minutes his breathing showed that he was asleep.

There was no danger of Will going to sleep right away.

He had been pretty well aroused, and the position in which he was now placed was not one conducive to repose.

He remained passive for some time, thinking over the sudden change in his condition.

"I suppose they'll put me down with Bob and his sister to-morrow," he thought. "Then I'll have to stay there as long as they are forced to."

That would mean the defeat of his plans to recover the bonds and save his friends.

He had expected to make his mark in Wall Street by his smartness in showing up Sam Burkett's conspiracy.

The detectives had failed to get to the bottom of it, and consequently he figured that it would be a big feather in his own cap if he succeeded.

Now all his anticipations were likely to end in smoke.

It made him mad to think that the rascally cashier had euchiored him.

He determined to try and make his escape if it took the rest of the night.

He began the effort at once.

He soon found that he had been tied to stay so.

However, he was not discouraged.

Where there is a will there ought to be a way, he argued.

So he kept on at his seemingly hopeless job.

He kicked, as well as he could, and squirmed.

The only thing he accomplished was to move himself and the chair a foot or two from its original position.

Finally an idea occurred to him.

He started to shuffle the chair over toward one of the walls.

Suddenly one of the legs gave way and he and the chair sank to the floor with a bump.

The noise did not arouse Patterson, and Will found, to his satisfaction, that the line confining his lower limbs was now loose.

The yielding of the chair leg around which it was tied had done this.

Will turned over and was able to stand up with the chair attached to his back.

He went over to the wall, and, backing up against it, pressed the hind legs hard against it.

In this way he loosened the line enough to enable him to draw one of his hands out of limbo.

His other hand followed.

In a little while he worked one arm loose.

As soon as he accomplished that he knew he would presently be free.

He shoved his freed hand into his pocket, got out his jack-knife, opened it with the help of his teeth, and five minutes later was as free as he ever was.

"Now what shall I do first," thought Will. "I can't get out because Patterson is lying asleep in front of the door. If I only could get Bob up here to help me, I think the two of us could put this crowd out of business. I wonder where the ladder is kept? The line Burkett uses to hoist and lower the basket is not strong enough to sustain the weight of my body or Bob's."

It was necessary to strike a match to look around, and Will was afraid the light would awaken Patterson.

He had to risk it, and when he flashed one he saw that the man's face was turned toward the door.

Moving cautiously around he saw no signs of the ladder.

It was either up in the loft, or had been carried outside.

Hanging under the stairs, Will saw a coil of light rope outside that he thought would answer the purpose.

He took it down and tested it as well as he could.

It appeared to be strong enough for the object in view.

He carried it to the corner where the trap was, after lighting the lantern.

Shooting back the bolt, he opened the trap and looked down.

All was dark and silent below.

He pulled on the line and up came the basket with the dirty dishes on it, and a few scraps of the supper which had been sent down to Bob and his sister.

He cut the basket loose and shoved it aside.

Then he tied one end of the light rope securely to the ring on the bottom of the trap and dropped the coil to the floor below.

To the cord he fastened the lighted lantern.

As he was about to lower that, too, he stopped as a thought occurred to him.

Something might happen to queer his plans; why not secure the stolen bonds while the chance was his?

If he had them on his person he would not need to lose time getting them later when, perhaps, he and Bob would have all they could do to make their escape with Nellie.

So he made his way to the corner where the loose board was.

Removing it with care he saw the package of bonds lying on a piece of wood.

He shoved them into his pocket and replaced the board.

"Sam Burkett will get the surprise of his life when he goes to get them, if he has the chance to do it," chuckled Will as he returned to the trap.

With a final look over at Patterson he lowered the lantern into the cellar till it hit the earthen floor and stood there, flashing its beams around a narrow circle.

"Now for myself," he said.

He let himself down carefully first by holding in to the floor.

Then he grabbed the rope and swung off.

No sooner had he done so than something happened.

The trap had been standing at an acute angle, for the heavy hinges wouldn't let it fall back on the floor.

The shock of Will's weigh coming suddenly on it pulled it over frontward, and it fell into its place over the hole with a loud bang that shook the hut, letting the boy down with a run.

CHAPTER XIII.

UNDERGROUND.

Will narrowly missed colliding with the lantern in his descent, his feet striking the ground on either side of it.

The boy realized at once how unfortunate was the fall of the trap.

He had not only accidentally made himself a prisoner, but cut off all hope of escape for Bob and Nellie.

That the noise had aroused the sleepers above was soon apparent.

He heard Patterson get up and tramp over to the table.

There he stopped, and Will judged he was feeling for the lantern to light it.

As the lantern was down with him, Patterson, of course, could not find it, and was naturally surprised.

At that moment Burkett put his head down and asked what the trouble was.

"I don't know," replied Patterson. "I'm trying to find the lantern. I left it on the table, but it doesn't appear to be there now."

"It's fallen on the floor, perhaps. The boy must have fallen over on the floor in the chair. I suppose that's what made the noise."

"Maybe so," replied Patterson. "I'll see as soon as I strike a light."

The man found a match and struck it, lighting the candle in the neck of the bottle which stood on the table.

When he looked around he was staggered to see the broken chair near the wall, the pieces of cord beside it, but no sign of the prisoner anywhere.

"He's escaped," he cried out.

"Escaped!" roared Burkett.

He rushed down the ladder in his undressed state and looked around.

"Where has he gone?" he cried.

"I couldn't tell you, but I know he didn't get out through the door."

"He couldn't have got out through the window without smashing the whole sash, and it hasn't been touched."

"It's blamed funny where he has gone then," said Patterson, looking under the table on the chance of finding the boy there.

Then he looked into the closet, though he knew there was no room there for the boy to hide himself.

"Maybe he ran up into the loft and is hiding there," he said.

"I don't believe it, but we can look. Where's the lantern?" said Burkett.

"I don't know where it is. It seems to have disappeared."

"How in thunder did that boy manage to free himself?" said the cashier, looking at the broken chair. "If he made

that noise I heard he got away mighty quick from this room."

"He certainly did, for I jumped up at once, and I didn't hear another sound showing he was around," said Patterson.

Will's disappearance from the room was a great mystery to the two men, and the fact that the lantern was gone, too, was also a strange feature of the case.

At that moment Burkett spied the basket which Will had hauled up out of the cellar.

He went over and looked at it.

"How did that come up here?" he said. "Why, it's been taken off the cord. I begin to smell a rat. The boy has gone down into the caves where our prisoners are. That settles his hash so far as making his escape is concerned. He'll remain there until the time comes for setting the others free."

"Sure he's down there?" asked Patterson.

"Yes. He discovered the trap. See, the bolt has been drawn, and I left it locked. Besides, nobody but he pulled up that basket. He probably thought he could find his way out of the hut that way. Instead of which he has simply trapped himself. In any case, he's made a discovery by this time that would prevent me from setting him free under any circumstances."

Burkett pulled open the trap and saw the rope by which Will had made his descent.

He didn't see anything else, for Will and the lantern were not there now.

"He made use of that rope which was hanging under the stairs. I can now understand the cause of the noise that awakened us. You see he tied the rope to this ring. He left the trap open naturally when he started to go down, intending to come back if he couldn't get out through what he supposed was the cellar. Well, his weight pulled the trap over, and it closed with a bang. Understand?"

Patterson said he did.

"He's down there with the others," said the cashier, pulling the rope up and then removing it from the ring. "He shall stay there as company for his friends."

Thus speaking, Burkett closed the trap and shot the bolt.

"Things couldn't have happened better, after all," he said. "We had to do something with him, and he has settled the question himself. We'll go back to bed now, for there's nothing to keep us awake any longer."

Let us return to Will.

When he heard Patterson moving around on the floor above his head, he picked up the lantern, released it from the cord, and stood listening.

Then he heard the cashier's voice, though he couldn't distinguish what Burkett said.

He judged that his mode of exit from the room would speedily be discovered, so he moved away to discover himself to his friends.

"They'll be astonished to see me here, but I dare say they'll be glad of my company. I've done my best to rescue them, and it isn't my fault entirely that I have failed to do it. However, I've got the stolen bonds, that's a great satisfaction, and I must see to it that they do not again fall into Sam Burkett's hands."

The cellar or cave beneath the hut communicated with several smaller caves, as Will soon found out.

He raised the lantern above his head and looked around. Right ahead of him he saw an opening in the wall of earth.

As there was no sign of his friends in that room, he judged he should find them by passing through the opening.

He lost no time in doing this, and found himself in a rude passage from which two similar openings opened off on either side.

He entered the one on the right side and flashed the lantern around.

On a cheap cot on one side lay Bob Burton, fast asleep.

The only other thing in the case was a folding stool with a back to it.

Bob looked pale and thin, as the result of his imprisonment in the poorly ventilated underground place.

Will flashed the lantern into the other case.

On a similar cot Nellie lay asleep.

She also showed the effects of her surroundings.

Will then examined two other caves beyond.

One of them was littered with broken and empty boxes, stamped with tobacco wording in Spanish.

The other was empty.

Apparently there was no exit from the underground region except by way of the hut.

Under such circumstances Will saw that he had cooped himself up with his two friends, and must remain a prisoner with them until it suited Sam Burkett's interest to let them go.

When that would happen was something of a problem as matters stood.

Will decided not to awaken Bob.

"When morning comes he and Nellie will awake of their own accord, and then they will find me here. I'll move a few of those boxes to the main cave and take a snooze on them. There is nothing else for me to do, but for fear that Burkett should find out that the bonds are gone, and suspect I have taken them, I'll bury the package where he's not likely to find it," said Will.

He did this first, and then spent the next ten minutes preparing a rude bunk for himself, on which he lay down, and despite the strangeness and unpleasantness of his surroundings, was soon asleep with an old bag, that smelt of tobacco, under his head for a pillow.

CHAPTER XIV.

WILL EXPLAINS.

Will slept like a top and did not wake up till he was aroused by a hand shaking him by the arm.

Then he sat up, and by the light of the lantern saw Bob staring at him in the greatest astonishment.

"Will Withers, is this really you?" exclaimed Bob.

"It surely is, Bob. Shake; I'm glad to see you, old man."

"How is it that you are here?"

"It's considerable of a story, Bob, which had best be deferred until your sister can hear it, too."

"You know, then, that she is also a prisoner in this place?"

"I do. I saw her asleep on her cot in the cave opposite the one you were in before I lay down here."

"Your presence here must mean that you also are a prisoner, but how that happens to be is more than I can understand."

"I'll make it all plain to you by and by. I will tell you this much now, that I got into this hobble hunting for you both."

"Hunting for us—you?"

"Why not? Aren't we the best of friends? Who should take a greater interest in you and your sister than I?"

"That's right, Will. You know where we are, then?"

"I do."

"That's more than we do ourselves. We were both brought here in an unconscious state—drugged. Why my sister has been subjected to this indignity is a mystery to me. As for myself, I can understand the reason in a way, thought it does seem odd that the men who robbed me of the package of D. & G. bonds I was taking to Mr. Hodge, in Redwood, should find it necessary to keep me a prisoner when all they had to do was to make their escape with their booty and leave me to be picked up hours afterward by the first person who came across me."

"Well, Bob, I can enlighten you on that subject, and I guess my explanation is going to give you the surprise of your life."

At that moment Nellie Burton appeared on the scene.

On awakening she heard her brother talking to somebody, and she came to see who their visitor was, for it was the first person who had so favored them since they had been put down there.

Her astonishment was great on recognizing Will.

"Why, Will Withers!" she cried.

"Glad to see you, Nellie, though I'm not glad to find you in this beastly hole. Sit down and I will let you both into a few facts that will take your breath away."

"Have you come to take us away?" she asked eagerly.

"I came to this island for that purpose, but a screw worked loose in my plan, and so I'm a prisoner like yourselves."

"A prisoner!" cried Nellie, her face showing her disappointment and concern.

"Exactly—a prisoner," replied Will.

"Did you say we are on an island?" asked Bob. "Where is it?"

"You are on an island in the Sound, somewhere off what I believe is the shore of Connecticut."

"How did you find out we were here?" asked Bob.

"That's part of my story. To begin with, I have an unpleasant surprise for you."

"Can it be any more unpleasant than the position I and my sister are in?"

"No, for that will be adjusted as soon as you are free."

"What is this surprise?"

"Mr. Burkett and every one in the office excepting myself and the cashier believe you have stolen the D. & G. bonds and have fled West with them, taking your sister with you."

"Great Scott! Do you mean that?" cried Bob, aghast.
"I do."

"Why do they believe that—because I have disappeared with the securities in my possession? Why do they not think I might have been robbed and done away with? Haven't I proved my honesty on a score of occasions?"

"You certainly have, Bob. The reason is because you are the victim of manufactured evidence."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I know the identity of the man who put the job up on you—who stole the bonds from you. The scheme was clearly planned before you left the office that Monday morning. You walked into a trap prepared for you."

"I know I did, though I have been unable to understand the matter. When I reached the station at Redwood——"

"You were met by a man who came there in a red automobile," said Will.

"How did you learn that?"

"I visited Redwood and learned the fact from the station agent."

"The man told me that Mr. Hodge sent him for me, and supposing he was that gentleman's chauffeur, I got into the auto. He drove me to a house somewhere on the suburbs. It didn't look like the residence of a wealthy man, and I began to suspect all was not right. When I objected to entering the place the man said it was all right. That Mr. Hodge was there visiting his cousin. I was hustled to the door, which opened, and I had just time to see that the building was a vacant one when I was attacked by the man who opened the door and dragged me inside. A cloth was pressed over my face and I remember nothing more till I found myself here, and the bonds gone," said Bob.

"Well, Bob, when you didn't return with the check for the bonds, a detective was sent out to look you up. Next day the cashier told all hands that you had stolen the bonds and gone West. The detective had reported that a young man answering your description had been seen boarding a Chicago express on the West Shore road at Weehawken. This young man was held up at Cleveland and proved to be somebody else, so that point against you fell through."

"I should think it would."

"The real thief, however, was wide awake. It was not to his interest to have the detectives looking around near New York for you. It was necessary to show that you really had gone West, so I have figured the matter out, your sister was enticed away, your flat given up, and your furniture put in storage, in order to make it appear that you had sent for her to join you. See the point?"

"My gracious!" cried Bob.

"The thief sent an accomplice out West to keep up the illusion, and he has managed to do it up to this moment."

"Say, Will, how did you find all this out?"

"To begin with, I had perfect confidence in your innocence. I stood out for you when the rest believed you guilty. I first went to Redwood to make inquiries there. I found out what I told you. That satisfied me that the detectives were working on the wrong scent. My word, however, wasn't worth much against the strong evidence that had been built up against you, so I determined to do a little detective work on the quiet. I doubt if I would

have been very successful but that luck played into my hands."

Will then told about Jenkins' visit to the office, and how it led to his finding out the identity of the man who stole the bonds.

"Who is this man?" asked Bob.

"I'm afraid you won't believe me when I tell you."

"Why not?" asked Bob, in some surprise.

"Because he's the last person you would suspect of being concerned in such a dastardly outrage, not only on you, but on his own relative and friend."

"I don't understand you."

"The man who put up this job on you is none other than the boss' nephew—Sam Burkett, and he's in the hut above at this moment."

"Impossible! You are mad, Will, to say that."

"I expected you to say that. It does look preposterous, but nevertheless it is the solemn truth. You and your sister are the victims of Sam Burkett's scheme to fleece his uncle, and I have positive knowledge of the fact."

Bob stared at Will as if he couldn't believe his ears.

CHAPTER XV.

CONCLUSION.

"I think I had better tell my story straight ahead and then you'll understand things more clearly," said Will, who started in and told Bob everything that the reader knows.

When he had finished right up to the point that he had accidentally made a prisoner of himself in his eagerness to save Bob and Nellie, Bob seized him by the hand.

"Will, you have proved yourself a true friend, and I am truly sorry that you are caught in the trap with us."

"You are the best boy in the world, Will," cried Nellie, "and we'll never be able to thank you enough."

"I have been caught, yes, but I have not entirely failed. I have found the stolen bonds in the place where they were hidden by Burkett, and they are now down here with us," said Will.

"You don't mean it," cried Bob, in some excitement.

"I do. If we could only make our escape everything would be all right with you, and Sam Burkett would see his finish pretty quick."

"You have the bonds in your pocket, then?"

"No, I have hidden them in the cave where the boxes are. I'll show you where. Come with me."

Bob and Nellie went with Will, and the young messenger pointed out the spot where he had buried the securities.

On their return to the main cave Nellie told Will how she had been tricked.

A man had called in a red automobile with word that her brother was lying critically ill at a house in Redwood.

Nellie said she accompanied the man readily to the village and was introduced into a vacant house, where she was grabbed and drugged with a cloth pressed over her face.

The next thing she knew was finding herself down there with her brother, who was not ill at all, but a prisoner, and since that time she had shared his fate.

At that juncture the trap was opened above and the disguised cashier called down to them:

"So you are there, Will Withers," he said. "You trapped yourself nicely. You will stay there with your friends till further notice."

Then he lowered down breakfast for three and closed the trap again.

"While there's life there's hope," chuckled Will, who was in good humor in spite of his unfortunate predicament.

The three prisoners ate their breakfast and then began to consider their situation.

"I'm going to dig out, and if you will lend me a hand, Bob, we'll get on so much quicker."

"What will we dig with—our hands?" asked Bob.

"Our hands, when there are so many broken pieces of wood lying around? I should say not. Look at that piece of box cover. That will make a first-class shovel. Now I'll start in first and see how it goes. When I get tired you can relieve me."

He started with a small hole at first to test the ground, and finding that there was going to be no great difficulty in boring a way to the surface, he enlarged the opening to a width sufficient to admit the passage of a single person.

"We'll come up into the wood like three moles," said Will to Nellie.

"But how can we leave the island?" she asked.

"They've got a motor launch. We'll get away with that. If we can't run it we can float around in the Sound until some craft picks us up."

Will and Bob had made pretty fair progress by the time dinner was sent down to them.

An hour after the meal the boys resumed work on their inclined tunnel.

They did not accomplish a whole lot that afternoon, but after supper they got busy again and made the dirt fly.

In order to give Will the chance to have a sleep on the cot it was arranged that they should work and rest alternately, and this method was carried out through the night.

Early next morning breakfast was sent down to them, and as soon as it was disposed of they returned to work on the tunnel with renewed vigor.

They put in the whole day on the job, and it was close on to sundown when Will jabbed his impromptu shovel through the surface and saw the light of afternoon shining through the wood.

He did not rush back to tell the others, but kept right at work until he had made a hole large enough to creep out at.

He pulled himself out and started to look around.

The hut was close by, of course.

He saw nothing of their enemies, but he knew they were still on the island, because the launch lay moored in the cove.

Will ventured to look in at the window, and saw the three men at their supper.

He then returned to his friends and told them that the tunnel was finished and the way to freedom clear.

"We must not make a move till they've sent us down our supper," he said.

Inside of half an hour their supper came down.

They ate it, and then Will dug up the bonds and led the way to the surface.

It was dark now, and the prospects favorable to getting possession of the launch.

Will went forward to investigate.

He learned that Patterson was going to take Jenkins up to a nearby Connecticut town where he could get a train for New York.

That gave the boy an idea.

While the attention of the men was otherwise employed, Will led Bob and his sister to the launch, and the three of them hid themselves in the forward compartment of the boat, which Will had occupied during the trip from New York.

Fifteen minutes later Jenkins and Patterson stepped aboard, while the cashier unmoored the craft.

The run to the town was made in a short time, and as soon as the power was shut off, Will and Bob came piling out of the hole and jumped on Patterson, whom they speedily put out of business.

They then attacked the astonished Jenkins and captured him.

The launch was then close in to the wharf and was soon made fast.

While Bob kept guard over the prisoners Will hunted up the police station.

He told his story to the officer in charge, and a couple of policemen were sent to take charge of the prisoners.

A man who understood how to run the launch was secured and Dick and an officer returned to the island and captured the discomfited Sam Burkett.

Will and his friends returned to the city that night and went straight to Broker Burkett's house.

To say that the broker was astonished at the inside details of the stolen bonds conspiracy engineered by his trusted nephew will give but a faint idea of his feelings.

He wouldn't have believed the facts if they hadn't been backed up by such substantial evidence of the cashier's duplicity.

The result was that he let the law take its course, and so Sam Burkett and his two associates who had been captured were duly tried and sent to Sing Sing for a long term of years.

As for Will, he received full credit for recovering the stolen bonds, and Mr. Burkett paid him the sum of \$5,000 as a reward for his services, which, with the \$4,700 he had made out of the market, made him worth nearly \$10,000.

The newspapers printed Will's story in full with his picture and a photo-reproduction of the hut on the island, and all Wall Street agreed that the boy had undoubtedly made his mark by recovering the stolen bonds.

THE END.

Read "A FAVORITE OF FATE; OR, AFTER THE HEAD HUNTERS' TREASURE," which will be the next number (263) "of Fame and Fortune Weekly."

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GOOD STORIES.

Shamokin, Pa., comes to the front with an entirely original story. Two young eagles were hatched out under a hen. Two months ago, Roman Ukleksi, of Shamokin, received from his brother in Germany two eagle's eggs. He placed them under a hen and awaited results. Recently the eggs, having ripened, fore forth fruit and two tiny little eagles are being cared for by the proud mother hen. There will be further doings when the lords of the air attain their full growth.

The inhabitants of Breslau, Germany, have started a fund for the erection of a monument to Josef von Eichendorff, who wrote many German songs of great popularity. At an entertainment for the benefit of the fund recently held at Breslau, Paul Keller related some anecdotes of the writer. He said that the well-known song, "In Einem Kuhlen Grunde," was sent in its original form in 1812 to Justinus Korner by the poet, who was then only 24 years old. Korner recognized the beauty of the composition, laid the manuscript on the table and the next moment a gust of wind carried it out and upon the fields. Korner hastened to find it and enlisted the services of every one he could find near his home, but the search was in vain, and the manuscript was given up for lost until weeks later, when it was found serving as a wrapper for a toy in a pedler's basket.

Recently a New York judge had before him a tramp who had been mobbed because he persisted in trampling an American flag under foot. "Why did you do that?" the judge asked. "Because it's all it's good for," was the astonishing reply. The judge sent the tramp into retreat for a few months, to give him an opportunity for a change of heart. One instance is known in which Old Glory's shame is the crown of a family's prestige. At the battle of Bladensburg the American troops were defeated by the British under the command of an Irish officer named Ross. In recognition of his services in winning this victory, his sovereign granted him the title of Ross of Bladensburg, and to his crest was added an American flag, reversed, with the shaft broken. The title is hereditary. In our generation the possessor is a colonel of the Irish Fusiliers who won some fame in the Boer war. And this Ross of Bladensburg uses as his crest to-day our Stars and Stripes turned upside down, and with the shaft broken in two.

Metals have life, said a metallurgist. Not much life, but a little. As plants' lives are to ours, so are metals' lives to plants. Here's the proof: You know how a strip of muscle

will contract under the electric current, and how, finally, it grows tired and contracts no longer? Well, with a strip of platinum it is the same thing. The platinum, too, grows tired and refuses to contract. And metals can be stimulated, depressed, poisoned. Thus: Platinum wire, immersed in water, gives off an electric current that may easily be measured. If you put bicarbonate of soda in the water the stimulated wire gives off a stronger current. Put in bromide of potassium, and the depressed wire gives off a weaker current. Finally put in oxalic acid and the poisoned wire gives off no current at all. It will never again give off any current. It is dead. Now I leave it to you. If you can tire a metal, depress it, exhilarate it, and finally administer to it a fatal dose of poison, have you not the right to say that the metal has life?

JOKES AND JESTS.

"A tree, you know, gets new clothes every spring—hat, parasol, everything." "Yes, darling—and makes them all itself."

"I thought you'd got a job?" "So I 'ave, putting on the dots in a domino factory." "Then why aren't you working?" "They're making double blanks to-day."

Johnny—May I borrow your specs to go blackberrying with, grandpa? Grandpa—What for? Johnny—Why, yesterday, I made a mistake and picked a bumblebee for a blackberry and I don't want to make a mistake like that again to-day.

"I think we shall like our new neighbors." "That so? Have you met any of them?" "No; but I watched their furniture being carried in yesterday, and there wasn't a phonograph or music box in the outfit."

"Sarah, I really wish you would be more careful; I do not like to hear your mistress scolding you so often," said the master of the house to the parlor-maid. "Oh, don't mind me, sir," replied Sarah, simply, "I take no notice."

"Answer me, Clara," he said in a moment of passion. "I can bear this suspense no longer!" "Answer him, Clara!" echoed the old man in the hall, thinking of the coal and gas bills. "I can't bear this expense much longer."

Nine-year-old Lizzie was taken to her first classical concert the other night. "How did you like it, Dot?" inquired papa, who had been too busy to attend. "Most of it was tiresome," said the child, "but there was one lady who gargled just beautifully."

Teacher—What is a person called who steals? No answer. Teacher—Now, Tommy, suppose I were to put my hand in your pocket and take out a penny, what would you call me? Tommy (fully conscious of a scarcity of coin)—"Please, sir, you would be a conjurer."

Standing by the entrance of a large mansion in the suburbs of Edinburgh are two big dogs carved out of granite. An English visitor, being driven past, thought he would take "a rise" out of the Scottish "jarvey," whose trap he had hired. "How often," he asked, "do you feed those two big dogs?" "Whenever they bark, sir," was the quick reply.

A BLOW FOR A RIVAL

By John Sherman.

"Gentlemen," said the captain of the British sloop-of-war, Sea Lion, as his lieutenants came up at his bidding, forming a semi-circle near him, with the midshipmen bringing up the rear. "There are the heights, and there is the fort. We storm and take that fort to-morrow or perish in the attempt! I need not say that I expect you will do your duty, for I know you will!"

Every officer bowed and saluted.

All eyes were then turned upon the fort.

Far up on the heights by the Chagres river, Panama, it stood, and seemed an impregnable work.

The height was steep and difficult, and the fort was well provided with guns, whose huge, dark muzzles could be seen frowning through the embrasures.

"Ay, gentlemen, look at it—there it is," continued the captain; "the stronghold of San Lorenzo! The admiral's order to me, ere we left Jamaica, was to take it at all hazards."

Bolt upright stood the lieutenant of marines.

"You hear, men?" he said, turning toward his corps of fine soldiers. "We are to take that Spanish fort."

Then from each marine, standing with his chin well up in his collar, and his tanned, freckled face immovable as a rock, came the simultaneous:

"Yes, sir," like the grinding sound of a clock ere it strikes. The midshipmen looked at each other.

The captain now stepped toward them and said:

"Young gentlemen, here will be a chance for one of you to distinguish himself by leading a party of sailors in the assault. Which shall it be?"

"I—I—I!" cried every boyish voice.

"I require only one."

"Let me be that one, Captain Warlock," said George Felton, a fine looking British youth of seventeen.

Another youth, Herbert Manning, of the same age, stepped forth and requested the honor of leading the party.

"He, too, was a fine, handsome fellow, but he was a native of New York, who had shipped aboard the vessel after she had touched at that port.

Mr. Felton darted an envious, angry glance toward him, when the captain said:

"I will choose you, Mr. Manning."

The latter saluted, and his dark eyes flashed with satisfaction as he answered:

"I thank you for the honor, Captain Warlock."

As the captain turned away to converse with his lieutenants, the mids crowded about Manning.

"Better make your will, old fellow," said one.

"Ay," remarked another, "you'll never get inside that fort, my boy."

"He may go in, but he'll never come out again," said a third.

Nevertheless, it could be seen that each of Manning's companions was disappointed because he had not been chosen, instead of the American youth.

"I don't see why the captain should favor an American, when all the rest of us are British midshipmen, from whom he might better have made his selection," said George Felton, loud enough for Manning to hear.

"Why better?" quickly inquired Manning.

"Because an Englishman should be chosen to lead Englishmen," answered Felton.

"You do not mean to imply that I will not do my duty, I hope?" said Manning, hotly.

"How can you, with your views?"

"What do you mean?"

"I will not accuse you of meditating treachery," said Felton, "but you cannot have the same heart in fighting for the English cause as the rest of us would."

"Explain yourself."

"Did you not tell me that you thought the passage of the Stamp Act, which there is a rumor of, in the British Parliament, as we heard at Jamaica, would be unjust and wrong to the American Colonies?"

"Ay, I said so, and I repeat it. Taxation of that kind would be tyrannical."

"You further said that, should the colonies rebel, you would join the Americans against Great Britain the moment your term of enlistment should expire."

"I said so, and I say so again," answered Manning, boldly.

"Such views are unbecoming an officer in his majesty's service."

"They are not, sir. We all have a right to our own opinions."

"And I think they are. Were I the captain, I would not trust one with such views to lead British sailors."

"Once for all, Felton," said Manning, "I inform you that you are mistaken. To-morrow shall prove how I mean to do my part."

"I would not trust you. Your heart will not be in the undertaking."

"Tis false!"

"Do you tell me I lie, sir?"

"I do."

"I expect satisfaction for this."

"You shall have it whenever you like—whenever we have the chance."

"By ——" said Felton, "and it shall not merely be with the fist. It shall be a combat to the death—with swords."

"I am the challenged party, and have a right to a choice. But be it so, swords, if you wish."

The other mids endeavored to make peace between their two hot-headed messmates.

But Felton was firm.

He insisted he would have the satisfaction he required.

All the talking of these young officers was done in the waist, and they took care to speak in low voices, so that neither the captain nor the lieutenants could overhear what was said.

"Mr. Manning," cried the captain, "take a cutter's crew and make soundings yonder," pointing to a beach at the base of some rocks, off which the sloop-of-war now was lying becalmed. "See how near we can approach the coast, and also look if there is a good place there for landing our men, and also make a careful inspection of the ground further inland, leading toward San Lorenzo."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Better take another of the young gentlemen with you to assist. You will go with him, sir," he added, turning to Felton.

"Ay, ay, sir," answered the latter, with fierce, inward joy.

"Be sure and go armed—take your swords," continued the captain.

Again Felton's pulse bounded with fierce pleasure.

"If I can prevent it, that American shall not have a command in the assaulting party to-morrow!" he reflected.

Soon shrilly rang the boatswain's pipe, followed by the hoarse, rasping voice of the boatswain's mate, as he bawled out:

"Third cutters away!"

Down went the boat, and into it bundled the crew as lively as crickets.

"A peaceful h'expedition," remarked one of the tars, in a low voice, as he winked to another. "H'it will be different to-morrow."

"Ay, Jack," was the reply. "That H'americana reefer'll git 'is jacket scorched some 'fore 'e's through. 'E'll smell powder h'if 'e never did before."

"Stow that!" said the coxwain, sternly.

The two midshipmen, with their swords buckled to their belts, now entered the boat.

"Give way, lads!" ordered Manning.

Away went the boat, and, as the beach was but two miles off, the party was soon making soundings.

This having been finally done, Manning walked off toward the interior to take a look at the country between this place and the fort which was to be attacked on the morrow.

Mr. Felton accompanied him.

The two had reached a secluded valley bordered by rocks and shrubbery when Felton paused and drew his sword.

"Retract what you said to me, Mr. Manning, or we must fight!"

"What I said to you?"

"Yes, you called me a liar!"

"Not until you accused me almost of intended treason."

"Granted. Well, sir, draw and look to yourself!"

"See here, Felton," answered Manning, "I am not going to fight you now."

Determined, however, to bring matters to an issue, Felton was about striking Manning across the breast with the flat of his sword, when the crash of musketry was heard from the shrubbery, followed by the whizzing of bullets.

Down went Manning, falling lifeless, and ere his companion, who had not been hit, could strike a single blow, he was surrounded and disarmed by half a dozen Spanish soldiers.

The soldiers made good speed with their prisoners through narrow paths known to themselves, for they had heard the shouts of the sailors, who, guessing what had happened from the report of musketry, had hastened in the direction of the noise.

An examination of Manning's injury showed that he had not been pierced by the bullet which had struck him.

It had glanced over his skull, though, with sufficient force to deprive him of his senses.

A little brandy soon brought him to.

In a few moments he seemed as well as ever.

Meanwhile, it was perceived that there was no hope of overtaking the fugitive soldiers with their prisoner.

They could presently be seen afar off, ascending the height with Felton, leading to the stronghold of San Lorenzo.

The cutter was rowed back to the Sea Lion. Manning reported the attack by the ambush of soldiers, but he made no mention of Felton's having been, by delaying the two in the valley, the probable cause of it.

A few hours later, a breeze having sprung up, the captain resolved to make his attack on that day, instead of waiting for the morrow.

The soundings having shown him how near he could approach the coast, he headed along parallel to it, until in a small bay within a quarter of a mile of the fort.

The commander of the latter rightly judged that the English captain would not try to bring his guns to bear upon the rocks, with one of his own officers a prisoner there.

"It does not matter much," said Captain Warlock, grimly. "Our shot could do no execution upon that lofty stronghold. Now, boys!" he shouted, waving his sword from the ship's quarter-deck, "advance, and let every man do his duty!"

"Come, lads!" cried Manning, in a ringing voice.

There was a loud hurrah and the sailors and marines commenced to scale the height.

Manning, sword in hand, led one of the advance parties.

With a roar like that of many thunders, the guns of the fort belched forth their contents, while volleys of musketry were poured from the parapets.

The howling, whizzing messengers of death came thick and fast.

Many a poor fellow was sent tumbling headlong down the height. Still, however, the survivors pressed up the steep ascent. And as the guns still roared and heavy shot and whistling bullets still flew, there was the gallant young Manning, ever in the van, cheering his party.

"On, boys, on!" came his ringing voice, again and again, while the flash of his sword was seen through the rolling smoke.

"Come, lads, press on! We must take that fort and rescue Mr. Felton!" he shouted, when still higher, with his men closely following him. Little did they know that, blended with his desire for victory, was also an earnest wish to free his brother midshipman, in order that, on the first opportunity, he might cross swords with him and give him the satisfaction he craved.

Pressing on like a veritable young tiger, Manning was soon within a few feet of one of the embrasures.

A tall soldier aimed a thrust at him with his bayonet. At the same moment, another would have cloven his skull with a sword had not a sailor shot this second assailant with a pistol.

Manning caught the bayonet of the soldier who had made the thrust, with his left hand, and, raising his sword with the other, sprang forward and cut him down just as another of his foes had raised a huge boulder above his head.

Down came the boulder, but Manning avoided it by dodging and thrust his sword into the Spaniard who had hurled the fragment of rock.

With a cheer he sprang into the fort, followed by his men.

Cutting down their foes right and left, the sailors now drove their opponents before them.

One, however, was about to bayonet the bound prisoner, young Felton.

He would have succeeded had not Manning sprung forward and passed his sword through the man's body, at the imminent peril of his own life, for a small field-piece had been slewed round by some Spaniards and was pointed straight toward him as he made his leap.

Fortunately the fallen soldier clutched the youth by his jacket and drew him down as he dropped, causing the ball from the field-piece, as it was discharged, to just graze his left shoulder, thus narrowly missing his heart!

Manning, releasing himself from the dying man's clutch, was soon on his feet.

And now there was a loud huzza, as the English took possession of the fort and their dusky flag waved from the parapets.

"Felton," said Manning, as he freed the prisoner from his cords, "I have saved your life that we may have a chance to meet as you desire!"

"Never!" cried the grateful midshipman. "I see that I made a mistake, and I retract all that I said! Mine shall never be the sword to cross yours after such gallant conduct on your part! Henceforth we are chums!"

Then and there the two young officers grasped hands and were ever after the firmest of friends aboard the ship.

Manning was highly complimented for his good conduct by all the officers of the Sea Lion, and none were more enthusiastic in his praise than Midshipman Felton, who had profited by his lesson taught him by his American messmate in the very jaws of death.

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